Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam

Islamic Perspectives on War, Peace and Conflict Resolution

Flamur Vehapi

WE LIVE IN a world rife with conflict – between nations, between religions, between ethnic groups and even between families – and yet there are no winners. Conflict leaves a path of destruction in its wake, from catastrophic loss of life at one end of the spectrum to enmity and grudges within hearts at the other. There is no inner or outer peace. And yet that is something that we all yearn for: to be at peace with ourselves and with others so that we can be the best human beings we are capable of, both individually and on a collective basis.

Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam argues the case for Islam as the prescription for constructing and maintaining a society of peace, tolerance, compassion, justice and equality at every level of humanity. The book draws exhaustively from the Qur'an and hadith and investigates and analyses historical events from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the early caliphate of Islam. Topics covered include:

- The Question of *Jihad*
- The Issue of Nonviolence in Islam
- Ethics of War and Peace according to the Shariah
- A Detailed Analysis of the Life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Peacemaker
- Exploring Human Nature in Order to Understand Conflict
- Practical Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution Advice for Individuals and Groups

"Mr. Vehapi's work is worth reading and making part of your library collection. The book addresses readers who are striving to understand and seek peaceful solutions to the world's conflicts. Wisdom will always prevail over coercion."

– **Col. / Dr. Edan Musa Al Zahrani**, College Director and Dean,
Prince Sultan Military College of Health Sciences, KSA

"This is a must-read book for those who want to understand Islam and its stance on war, peace and conflict resolution. *Conflict Resolution in Islam* is a well-thought-of and well-written book...Simply brilliant."

– **Burhan Aldin Fili**, author and scholar of Islam

Flamur Vehapi is a researcher, writer, academic and a student of peace and conflict resolution. He was born in Kosova and later exiled by the brutal Serbian regime in the late 1990s. He received his bachelor's degree from Southern Oregon University where he majored in counselling psychology with a minor in history and, in 2013, received his master's from Portland State University in Conflict Resolution. Later, Vehapi taught both at Rogue Community College and Southern Oregon University, and recently he has been teaching in the Middle East. His work and research interests include peace and conflict studies, nationalism, diplomacy, human rights, social justice, religion, the Balkans and the Middle East. While in Southern Oregon, Vehapi received the 2009 Imagine Award for Community Peacemaking. This is Vehapi's fourth published book, three of which are poetry volumes.

Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd.
Unit 4, The Windsor Centre
Windsor Grove, West Norwood
London, SE27 9NT, UK

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Flamur Vehapi

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First Published in August 2016
by:
Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd.
Unit 4, The Windsor Centre, Windsor Grove
West Norwood
London, SE27 9NT
United Kingdom
www.tahapublishers.com

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A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library
ISBN: 978 1 84200 160 8

Printed and bound by: IMAK Ofset, Turkey

Cover artwork © Kanaan Kanaan 2006, *Image vs. Word*. This painting is a continuation of the artist's personal belief in using art to reach out to others, to heal and make connections. He believes that as different as we are in colour, ideology or standing within the social spectrum, we look beautiful together. His rich and aesthetically pleasing artwork reflects his message and creates a dialogue anchored in peace and beauty. Kanaan Kanaan is a Palestininan American artist born in Jordan. His work has received critical accolades throughout the Pacific Northwest and has been exhibited nationally and internationally. For further information see www.kanaankanaan.com.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my beloved parents who brighten my life every time I speak with them while I am away from them; and to my wife Nicole, of course, who has always been my greatest ally and proponent. It is also dedicated to my brother and sister and their families who have been tremendous supporters of my work. Last but not least, this work is dedicated to everyone who has come into my world, has left, and continues to leave a positive mark in this journey of mine we call life.

"And do not dispute with one another lest you fail and your moral strength desert you; and be patient and persevering: For Allah is with those who patiently persevere."
– The Noble Qur'an (8:46)

Contents

	Foreword	viii
	Preface	x
	Acknowledgements	xiii
	Introduction	xv
	The Timeline of the History of Islam	xviii
	Part One: Islam, Its Major Concepts, And Misconceptions	
Chapter 1:	Islam and Modern Challenges	1
	The Need to Deconstruct the Dominant Narratives about Islam and Muslims	2
	The Process of Enmification	4
	Islamophobia: Historical Truths and Misconceptions	10
	Embracing the Differences and Finding a Way Forward	16
Chapter 2:	A Historical Background of Islam	19
	The Birth of Islam and the Qur'an	19
	Major Concepts of Islam	23
	The Misunderstood Shariah	26
	The Spreading of Islam and its Contributions to the World	28
	Islam and the West	31
	Islam Today	34
	Diversity and Differences in the Muslim World	34

Part Two: War and Peace in Islam

Chapter 3:	War, Peace and Everything in Between	38
	Peace as the Norm	38
	War as the Exception	45
	The Question of *Jihad*	50
	The Question of Nonviolence in Islam	53
Chapter 4:	Ethics of War and Peace	58
	A Glimpse at the Western Perspectives on the Ethics of War and Peace	58
	Ethics in Islam	61
	Islam vs. Realism and Pacifism	65
	Islam and the Just War Theory (JWT)	66

Part Three: The Example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Chapter 5:	The Practice of the Prophet ﷺ	77
	The Importance of the Prophetic Example	72
	Muhammad ﷺ Before Prophethood	75
	The Makkan Years of Prophethood	78
	The Madinan Years of Prophethood	81
	The Character of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ	91
Chapter 6:	In the Footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ	95
	Notable Examples of Prophetic Conduct	95
	Muslim Women as Champions of Peace	100

Part Four: Human Nature and Inter-Personal Conflict in Islam

Chapter 7:	The Islamic Concept of Human Nature	108
	The State of the Heart	108
Chapter 8:	The Approach of the Qur'an and Sunnah to Achieving and Maintaining Peace	113
	The Purpose of Conflict	114
	The Islamic Prescription for Peace and Conflict Resolution	115
	Practical Steps to Conflict Resolution and Peace Restoration	129

Chapter 9:	Peacebuilding in the Modern Era	136
	Religion, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding	136
	Modern Initiatives	139
Chapter 10:	A Faith Committed to Peace	143
Chapter 11:	Reflections, Conclusions and Recommendations	148
	A Prayer for Peace	**153**
	Appendices	**154**
Appendix A:	The Farewell Sermon of the Prophet ﷺ	154
Appendix B:	The Constitution of Madinah (The Madinah Charter) (622 CE)	157
Appendix C:	The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah (628 CE)	168
Appendix D:	The Agreement of Umar ؓ with the People of the Surrendered City of Jerusalem (638 CE)	170
Appendix E.	Quick Tips for Conflict Resolvers and Mediators	172
	Glossary of Arabic Terms	175
	Bibliography	179
	Index	192

Foreword

The role of religion in human societies has never been a simple one. More complex, and often extremely controversial, has been the role of religion in violent conflict, not only throughout history in general but in modern and contemporary times in particular. Equally complex, yet most noteworthy has also been the role of religion as a force for peace, justice and reconciliation in the world. The critical challenge is thereby to distinguish and differentiate these ambiguous and often contradictory historical trends within religion, as doing so will help demarcate the fundamental difference between religion as an erosive force and religion as a spiritual and redemptive force.

Historically, from ancient times to contemporary times, religion has been seen to endorse and participate in imperial wars, in colonialism, in ethno-national civil wars and in international wars. In more recent times, one has also seen religion functioning as both a motivating and mobilising force in sectarian conflicts, both within as well as between traditional religious identity groups. The outcome of this role of religion has tarnished the moral standing of religion and has in effect eroded its spirituality, transforming it from a redemptive force to a worldly, destructive force.

However, of extraordinary significance has also been the historical role of religion in preventing war, and in building and sustaining peace. Throughout history, one sees religious movements and leaders, functioning as agents of peace, engaged in historical processes of conflict transformation, of reconciliation, of justice, of mercy and of forgiveness, thus substantially contributing to peacebuilding, as well as to the human and spiritual wellbeing of societies that result from it. In so doing, religion has historically initiated healing and edification, bringing human beings closer to each other and to the divine. These traditions within the history of religion have distinctively retained and deepened spirituality, which is the central characteristic that preserves and reflects authenticity in religion.

The peacebuilding function of religion has never been more significant and urgent in its contribution than in our contemporary world. It is precisely this peace enhancing function of religion that is gradually re-emerging, struggling to bring to the forefront of cultures and history the challenges of a more spiritual perspective, which places humanity and the peaceful resolutions of differences and conflicts at the heart of authentic religiosity. This urgency and challenge is precisely what drives the work of Mr. Flamur Vehapi, the author of the subsequent chapters that follow in this book. In a spiritually sensitive, intellectually credible, and in a socially conscious manner, Mr. Vehapi presents the historical and spiritual foundations of Islam, making the case that in its authentic spirituality, Islam is a religion of peace.

Dr. Harry Anastasiou
Professor of International Peace and Conflict Studies
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Preface

As history testifies, we humans have mastered the art of war. In fact billions of dollars are spent every year in military industries around the world in order to 'protect' one nation from another or to dominate some other nation. The amount of money spent on our war industries is so great that weapons engineers are continually striving to invent new weaponry with ever more sophisticated and destructive capabilities. If we have almost reached the limits of development in the art of war, I see it as only fair that we now start developing the art of peace.

Having said this, a quote of Karen Armstrong, I feel, is a great opener for this work because in less than a page, Armstrong addresses the most crucial problems humanity faces today and will continue to face if some of the issues raised below are not carefully addressed or not addressed at all, as seems to be the case in many parts of the world. Armstrong writes:

> Perhaps every generation believes that it has reached a turning point of history, but our problems seem particularly intractable and our future increasingly uncertain. Many of our difficulties mask a deeper

> spiritual crisis...Sadly, our ability to harm and mutilate one another has kept pace with our extraordinary economic and scientific progress. We seem to lack the wisdom to hold our aggression in check and keep it within safe and appropriate bounds. The explosion of the first atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki laid bare the nihilistic self-destruction at the heart of the brilliant achievements of our modern culture. We risk environmental catastrophe because we no longer see the earth as holy but regard it simply as a 'resource'.

Realising that the world is in desperate need of a paradigm shift in ways of believing, thinking and doing, Armstrong adds:

> Unless there is some kind of spiritual revolution that can keep abreast of our technological genius, it is unlikely that we will save our planet. A purely rational education will not suffice. We have found to our cost that a great university can exist in the same vicinity as the concentration camp. Auschwitz, Rwanda, Bosnia, and the destruction of the World Trade Center were all dark epiphanies that revealed what can happen when the sense of the sacred inviolability of every single human being has been lost. Religion, which is supposed to help us to cultivate this attitude, often seems to reflect the violence and desperation of our times. Almost every day we see examples of religiously motivated terrorism, hatred, and intolerance.[1] An increasing number of people find traditional religious doctrines and practices irrelevant and incredible, and turn to art, music, literature, dance, sport, or drugs to give them the

1. Although religiously motivated terrorism is a problem that cannot be ignored, not all terrorism is motivated by religion, any particular religion. In fact, terrorism has no religion, and as Robert Pape shows more than half of the cases of terrorism from the 1980s (that he studied) were committed by radical non-religious groups and nationalist movements in their hopes of achieving specific goals for their causes, the world leader of all (in suicide terrorism, for example) being "the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, a group that adheres to a Marxist/Leninist ideology" (See Pape, 2003, pp. 343-360).

> transcendent experience that humans seem to require. Some are looking for new ways of being religious. Since the late 1970s there has been a spiritual revival in many parts of the world, and the militant piety that we often call 'fundamentalism' is only one manifestation of our post-modern search for enlightenment.[2]

However, I believe there is still hope in this world, given that people have gone through challenges before, albeit perhaps not of this magnitude. This study is a humble attempt to show that religion can be utilised for good and for the betterment of humanity, and in many parts of the world it is being used for this very purpose as we speak.[3] Specifically, this work attempts to introduce a new approach to peace and conflict resolution taking the religion of Islam as its catalyst. This 'new' kind of approach to peacemaking and conflict resolution is in fact an ancient one, as Muslims have embodied and applied such principles since the advent of Islam. This is even evidenced in a hadith when a foreign delegation had visited the Prophet ﷺ of Islam in Madinah. Upon their departure, it is reported that these foreign visitors requested that the Prophet ﷺ send one of his Companions with them[4] in order to adjudicate matters between them.[5]

The Author
Abu Dhabi, UAE
January 2016

2. Armstrong, 2006*b*, pp. xv-xvi.
3. See Hayward, 2012*b*, pp. 2-8.
4. Hudhayfa reported that the people of Najran came to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and said, "Allah's Messenger, send along with us a man of trust," whereupon he said, "I will definitely send to you a man of trust, a man of trust in the true sense of the term." Thereupon his Companions looked up eagerly and he sent Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah (Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*).
5. Ramadan, 2007, p. 116. See also *Companions of the Prophet* (Vol.1) by Abdul Wahid Hamid.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I thank the Almighty for enabling me and giving me the opportunity to put these words and ideas together to the best of my ability, so that I can share them with my readers worldwide. Secondly, there are many wonderful people I feel honoured to have worked with and wish to acknowledge for their great support for my work, growth and understanding of peace and conflict resolution. Many thanks to Dr. Harry Anastasiou, Mr. Stan Sitnick, Dr. Robert Gould, Dr. Tom Hastings, Dr. Rachel Cunliffe, Dr. Amanda Byron Smith, and many others at Portland State University for their supervision of this research. Heart-felt thanks to Mr. Mamadou Toure, Mr. Burhan Fili, Dr. Abdullah Alkadi, Mr. Amr Khalifa, Dr. Joel Hayward, Dr. Robert Harrison, Dr. John Richards, Stella Williams, Robert Taylor, and others for their great contributions to this work and above all for their invaluable support and friendship. Memorable thanks to Dr. Masud and Mrs. Salma Ahmad, Joseph and Shirley DioGuardi, Mike and Linda Tresemer, Judith Jensen, Philip Randall, Carl, Donna, Anne and Richard Offenbacher, Rick Williams, Tahir Kukaj, Didmar Faja, Noreen Qureshi, Maqsood Chaudhary, Linda Barnes, Bruce Beaton, Gadi Kenny, Dana Lundell,

and the following families: Brady and Wright, Govori, Yavuz, Mayfield, Hasan, Al-Rashdi, Obaidi, Mirza, Jaffar, Rockholt and Manlulu, Petersen, Sumariwallah, Sours, Bresa, Gashi, Al Baloushi, and more. Special thanks to Kanaan Kanaan for his aid and for sharing his exceptional art work for the cover of this book.

Introduction

Islam is the world's fastest growing religion. There is an abundant and very rich quantity of knowledge found in the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ[6] and, as such, this religion has contributed tremendously not only to Muslim societies but also to the Western world. This book deals with one aspect of this contribution; namely the field of peace and conflict resolution – an area that requires particular attention, especially in the current day and age.

One of the goals of this work is to show that not every conflict can or should be approached from one angle. Conflict is multi-faceted and dependent on a number of factors, which is why there exist a number of paths that can be pursued for the purposes of conflict resolution. One of these paths is the Islamic approach. The primary purpose of this study is to unearth the tradition of peace and conflict resolution

6. ﷺ is the Arabic form of *'sallAllahu alayhi wa sallam'* (meaning peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used throughout this book after the name of Prophet Muhammad. ﷺ is the Arabic for *'alayhi salaam'* (meaning peace be upon him) used after the names of the other prophets and that of Angel Gabriel [Jibril]. These are added as a sign of honour and respect for them and is something that is done by Muslims worldwide.

from an Islamic perspective – a perspective that is unknown even to many Muslims today. Although the main body of the book deals with the subject on a societal and international level, there is also a section on dealing with conflict on a familial and interpersonal level.

The book draws exclusively from the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith and investigates and analyses historical events from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the early caliphate of Islam. To this end, the following texts have been used: the Qur'an translations in this book are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*; Muhsin Khan and Al-Hilali's *The Noble Qur'an*; Muhammad Asad's *The Message of the Qur'an*; Sahih International's *The Qur'an*; *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* translated by Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley; and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthal's *The Glorious Qur'an: Text and Explanatory Translation*.

As for the hadith literature used in this book, the most commonly cited works are the collections of Imam al-Bukhari and that of Imam Muslim, *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, respectively. Other collections included are *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Jami at-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Bayhaqi*, and others as indicated in the footnotes.

Regarding the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the most consulted work in this book is Muhammad ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, translated by Alfred Guillaume as *The Life of Muhammad*. Ibn Ishaq (d. 767 CE)[7] is the earliest Muslim historian and biographer of the Prophet ﷺ, whose work survives today through the efforts of his editors, Ibn Hisham and Ibn Jarir al-Tabari among others.

To further explore the concept of conflict resolution in Islam, various voices of classical and contemporary scholars are included in this study of the sacred texts of Islam. Some questions addressed in this book are: Where do the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the hadith, stand as far as peace and conflict are concerned? How might this knowledge be valuable to Muslims today in these times of great turmoil involving the Muslim world after September 11?

7. Instead of the BC and AD year designations of the Julian and the Gregorian calendars, this book uses BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) respectively.

And most importantly, what does Islam have to teach about conflict resolution in a world torn by war and conflict?

I do acknowledge that these questions are too deep to be fully dealt with in one volume of work. However, I have attempted to cover the main points from an Islamic perspective, as found in the authentic and primary sources of the religion, the Qur'an and hadith knowing that, as Professor Abu-Nimer had pointed out after September 11, these primary sacred texts "and other Islamic traditional sources provide plenty of evidence to support the conviction that Islam is a religion of peace and justice, and that nonviolent practices are well rooted in the religion."[8] It is beyond the scope of this volume to comment in depth about the conflicts and events that are unfolding in parts of the Muslim World today although the nature of the book is such that I will only refer to some current events such as the present-day unrests and the involved actors in certain parts of the Middle East region.

The book itself is ordered as follows: In Part 1, the fundamentals of Islam and the major concepts of the faith are introduced. Part 2 outlines the injunctions laid out in the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and hadith, regarding peace and conflict, while Part 3 explores how these injunctions were applied by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his early followers in practice. Finally, Part 4 addresses the concept of conflict and conflict resolution in Islam within the context of human nature and how Islamic precepts can be used not only for personal development but also in the construction of a peaceful society. The latter section of Part 4 argues for the central role that religion can, and should, play in modern peacebuilding initiatives as well as highlighting just some of the remarkable work being done in this field today.

8. As qtd. in USIP Special Report, 2002, p. 6.

The Timeline of the History of Islam

570 CE	The birth of Muhammad ﷺ in Makkah
610	Prophet Muhammad ﷺ receives the first revelation of the Qur'an in the Cave of Hira
622	Hijrah takes place – Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his followers flee Quraysh persecutions and migrate to Madinah; the Islamic calendar begins
624	Muslims successfully defeat the Makkans at the Battle of Badr
625	Muslims suffer a defeat by Makkans at the Battle of Uhud
627	Muslims defeat the Makkan army at the Battle of the Trench
628	The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah is signed by the Prophet ﷺ and peace is established in the region between Muslims and non-Muslims
630	Makkans violate the peace treaty. In return the Prophet ﷺ goes to capture Makkah but it surrenders voluntarily, and the Makkans are forgiven

632	Prophet Muhammad ﷺ dies; Abu Bakr is elected his representative (caliph)
633-34	The Wars of Riddah take place in order to unite the tribes who seceded from confederacy; all tribes of Arabia are united
634	Abu Bakr dies; Umar ibn al-Khattab becomes caliph
638	Jerusalem is captured and becomes the third holiest city after Makkah and Madinah
644	Umar ibn al-Khattab is assassinated; Uthman becomes the caliph
656	Uthman is assassinated and many, but not all, accept Ali ibn Abi Talib as the fourth caliph; two opposing camps of Muslims are created
657	An effort to arbitrate between the two sides at Siffin fails and Muawiyyah (Ali's oppose) is proclaimed as caliph in Jerusalem
661	Ali is murdered by a Kharajite; Muawiyyah I takes complete control and founds the Umayyad dynasty moving his capital from Madinah to Damascus
680	Yazid I becomes the second Umayyad caliph; Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet ﷺ is killed; divisions widen; the Shi'a movement arises
687-705	Caliph Abd al-Malik restores the Umayyad dynasty
691	The Dome of the Rock is completed in Jerusalem
705-717	Muslims take North Africa and establish a kingdom in Spain
749-750	The Abbasids overthrow the Umayyads; for the first time an absolute monarchy is established
756	Spain secedes from the Abbasids becoming a caliphate of its own
762	Baghdad becomes the new capital of the Abbasids
786-808	The reign of Harun al-Rashid; a great cultural renaissance occurs in the empire. Scholarship, arts and sciences are greatly encouraged and flourish

814-15	The Shi'a rebel in Basrah
833-42	The reign of Caliph al-Mutasim; his capital is moved to Samarra
912-61	The reign of Caliph Abd al-Rahman III in the Spanish kingdom of Al-Andalus
969-1027	Cordova is the centre of learning
969	Fatimids gain power in Egypt and attack Palestine, Syria, and Arabia; Cairo is founded
1055	Seljuk Turks take Baghdad
1071	Seljuk troops defeat the Byzantines at Battle of Manzikurt
1085	Toledo falls to the Christian armies of the Reconquista
1095	Pope Urban II launches the First Crusade
1099	The Crusaders conquer Jerusalem
1171-1250	The Ayyubid dynasty is founded by Salahudin Ayyubi
1187	Salahudin's armies defeat the Crusaders at the Battle of Hattin and retake Jerusalem
1220-1358	The Mongol threat; rule of Golden Horde Mongols and their conversion to Islam
1250	The Mamluks overthrow the Ayyubids and establish rule in Egypt and Syria
1258	Mongols capture Baghdad; the city is ransacked and the caliph is killed; the end of the Abbasid caliphate
1281-1334	Reign of Osman, the founder of the Ottoman Empire
1389	The Ottomans take over the Balkans after their victory at the Battle of Kosova
1453	Sultan Mehmet II 'the Conqueror' conquers Constantinople making it the capital of the empire, now known as Istanbul
1492	The Muslim kingdom of Granada is captured by the monarchs of Castile and Aragon; all Muslims and Jews are sent into exile from Spain

1501	Shah Ismail I establishes the Safavid dynasty in Persia and declares Shi'ism the official religion of the state
1517	The Ottomans take control of Makkah and Madinah
1520-1566	Reign of Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent; the empire reaches its apex
1556	Akbar founds the Mughal dynasty in northern India
1627-1658	Shah Jahan rules the Mughal Empire
1774	The Ottomans are defeated by the Russians
1789-1807	Sultan Selim III introduces reforms to westernise the Ottoman Empire
1798-1801	Napoleon Bonaparte occupies Egypt
1805-1848	Muhammad Ali begins a campaign of modernisation in Egypt
1808-1839	Sultan Mahmud II introduces more reforms to modernise the Ottoman Empire
1839-1861	Sultan Abdulhamid introduces more reforms of modernisation in order to halt the fall of the Ottoman Empire
1861-1876	Sultan Abdulaziz introduces further reforms for the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire but in so doing, he drives the empire into bankruptcy
1871-1879	Muslim thinkers and reformers like Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu call for the revitalisation of Islam
1916-1921	The Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire
1917	The Balfour Declaration is enforced in Palestine
1919-1921	The Turkish War of Independence takes place under the lead of Kamal Ataturk
1924	The Turkish National Assembly abolishes the Caliphate

Part One

Islam: Its Major Concepts and Misconceptions

Chapter 1

Islam and Modern Challenges

The Need to Deconstruct the Dominant Narratives about Islam and Muslims

Nowadays, many Orientalists, among others, speak of Islam as if it began in the late 1970s with the Iranian Revolution or in the 1990s with the rise of certain radical groups in some parts of the Muslim world, or as is now the case with the Middle East.[1] Islam is being framed and portrayed in such a way that many Westerners today see it as something foreign and incompatible with the West, thus having nothing to offer to the rest of the world. As a result of these imposed misconceptions, the underlying assumption has become that Muslims live in a stagnant world "and pre-modern tradition that has failed to respond to the challenges of modernity; essential values, such as progress, science, reason, freedom, and equality, have not yet set in."[2]

However, a close look at the history of Islam reveals that Islam, as a faith and civilisation and as a way of life, has been anything but stagnant, backward, irrational and intellectually inactive or unproductive. In fact, many such fabricated claims can easily and

1. For more on the topic of Orientalism concerning 'the East', see *Orientalism* by Edward Said.
2. Huda, 2010, p. xv.

best be refuted by the Qur'an itself, which frequently calls upon humanity to study, reflect, learn, reason and discover[3] the bounties of the Creator.[4]

As a result of this divine encouragement for hard work, knowledge and service to humanity, thriving great centres of learning sprung up in almost every major city in the Muslim world. For example, the 'House of Wisdom' was founded in Baghdad in the eighth century as a major centre of learning and original research in humanities, medicine and sciences. By the mid-ninth century, it housed the largest library of books in the world. This was in stark contrast to the intellectually, culturally and economically stagnant 'Dark Ages' that much of Europe was experiencing. Although this topic is beyond the scope of the book, the point of note here is that, whether we want to accept it or not, the modern world is indebted to Muslim civilisation since its earliest days.

Writing on an issue which many Western historians avoid addressing, Mark Graham points out that the great contributions of Islam to the Western world have been consistently ignored. He adds that this in fact "is a story that needs to be told... It is the story of how precious heritage of knowledge [especially from the ancient Greeks] was not simply preserved but reconstituted and re-imagined. And it is the story of how medieval Europe gave birth to the Renaissance." He continues, "[This] is the story of how Islam created the modern world"[5] and imparts the following advice to Western readers:

> We must begin learning history by *un*learning the cultural 'truths' we have been taught about Islam... These paradigms have nestled in the muck of our collective unconscious for centuries... It was because Islam was so successful that our culture made it seem

3. In fact the first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Qur'an was *Iqra*, meaning read, recite, reflect, ponder, etc., which encouraged, and to this day encourages, Muslims around the world to study and develop constantly in every possible aspect.
4. Please note that the terms God, Allah and the Creator are used interchangeably throughout this book to refer to the Divine. However, since the name *Allah* is most commonly used for God in all major Islamic works, this terminology will be maintained throughout the book.
5. Graham, 2006, p. 12.

> like a failure. It was because we owed Muslims so much that we pretended we owed them nothing... The Islamic world and the 'West' are (and always have been) an intricately-bound system of cultural and religious interaction.[6]

Graham closes with the words:

> It is time for memory to triumph over collective amnesia. Islam belongs to the West as much as the Egyptians and the Greeks. We are the heirs of Ibn Rushd and Al-Razi as much as we are the heirs of Plato and Hippocrates...It is in the writing of that new history that we might finally unlearn what has pulled us apart and learn anew what we share as the children of Abraham and Aristotle.[7]

From such works, it becomes apparent that Islamic civilisation not only contributed to that of the West, it forms an integral part of the latter.[8] However, this is a reality that continues to be intentionally excluded from most Western educational curricula. The grand old narrative has to change because history is not black and white as has been portrayed for centuries in the Western world; it is a mosaic of colours and materials from different parts of the world.

The Process of Enmification[9]

People have fickle memories when it comes to history. It is easy to forget or ignore the past, or worse still, to airbrush it in order to appease modern sensibilities. As a result, it becomes difficult to differentiate the past from the present, and, in turn, to learn the lessons that history may be trying to teach us. In reality, nothing stays the same; nothing is black and white, or good versus evil. And that is precisely what this book aims to do in part: to present the long ignored story

6. Ibid, p. 182.
7. Ibid. Al-Razi and Ibn Rushd (known in the West as Averroës) were ninth and twelfth century Muslim philosophers respectively.
8. See USIP Special Report, 2002, p. 2.
9. The term refers to the process of enemy making.

of Islam's contribution to the field of conflict resolution and beyond. But before that story can be told, it is necessary to examine some of the reasons behind why it has been overlooked for so long.

Research in the fields of philosophy, psychology and conflict resolution shows that from an early age, before even learning any kind of history, people feel the need to have an enemy of some sort. They will look for one, and if they cannot find one, they will invent one. Once one enemy has been eliminated, people will search for a new one wherever they can.

History bears witness that at any given time "people have been targeted for broad-based hatred,"[10] examples being the Jewish people, Catholics, Protestants, Africans, Gypsies and so on. In the United States, as a case in point, various groups have been labelled as the enemy through time, including the Native populations, African-Americans and the Irish. Once the 'threat' from one group diminishes, then another group is labelled as the enemy; for example, with the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Soviets ceased to be an enemy to the Americans. However, as Professor of Anthropology, John Bowen points out, today "the primary targets of hate are Muslims, whether it is in the United States or Europe."[11]

The process of enmification is as old as human beings themselves leading to differences in opinion as to whether it is a part of human nature, nurture or both. However, the mode of propaganda changes with the times. *Faces of the Enemy* is a documentary film in which a great collection of political cartoons and artwork is shown to demonstrate how twentieth century war propaganda around the world has depicted the enemy. The film opens with the words, "Before we make war, even before we make weapons, we first create the idea of an enemy whom we can fight."[12] Nation-states identify a perceived threat or simply project their fears and shortcomings onto another group. That group is portrayed as being different and having alien ideas. It becomes a case of, "You are either with us or against us" which polarises people into two camps: 'us' vs. 'them' (or 'the other'). 'The other' is consequently perceived as being less human

10. Bowen, 2012, p. 3.
11. Ibid.
12. Keen, 1987, *Faces of the Enemy*, DVD.

and thus deserving of oppression and killing. In this way, the twin processes of dehumanisation[13] and enmification are complete.

Volkan expands on these ideas in his article, "The Need to Have Enemies and Allies".[14] According to him, there is a psychological benefit in having a scapegoat or someone to blame for an undesirable event or outcome. That scapegoat should be suppressed as soon as possible and by any means possible in order to elicit a more desirable set of circumstances. Those who benefit the most from having enemies are people in positions of power with grand political agendas. Through their campaigns of fear-mongering, these elites create a false situation of urgency that mobilises their followers and helps achieve their goals. Hitler, for example, made excellent use of this tactic to convince the German people that their European neighbours were the enemy. (Incidentally his European neighbours were doing exactly the same to him.)

At this juncture, the critical questions arise: why do people act in this manner and how do so many rational thinking human beings, as so often witnessed in our history, fall into these seemingly obvious traps so easily? Explaining this apparently bizarre behaviour, Stanford University psychologist, Philip Zimbardo, notes that the process "begins with stereotyped conceptions of the other, dehumanized perceptions of the other, the other as worthless...the other as demonic, the other as an abstract monster, the other as a fundamental threat to our cherished values and beliefs." Therefore, he adds:

> With public fear notched up and enemy threat imminent [usually imagined], reasonable people act irrationally, independent people act in mindless conformity, and peaceful people act as warriors. Dramatic visual images of the enemy on posters, television, magazine covers, movies, and the internet imprint on the recesses of the limbic system, the primitive brain, with the powerful emotions of fear and hate.[15]

13. Dehumanisation is a psychological process by which one group of people portrays another as less than human, often as threatening and worthy of annihilation.
14. Volkan, 1985.
15. Zimbardo, 2007, p. 11.

On this note, Volkan points out that people form their sense of 'self' in childhood during the stages of personality and identity development. During that stage, they will form attachments with certain groups that they identify with or feel a sense of belonging to, such as on the basis of ethnicity and nationality and so on. During times of political turmoil or military conflict, people have a renewed sense of 'self' and adhere even more strongly to those groups that they identified with in childhood. Those who belong to the same groups are considered allies, while those who do not become the 'enemy'.

This is the process by which groups that have co-existed in harmony with each other can suddenly become sworn enemies. For example, in Cyprus, Muslim Turks and Christian Greeks lived side by side for centuries as one group that identified itself as the Cypriots. As a result of the rise of nationalistic feelings and military conflict, they were polarised into two camps, the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, that regard each other with animosity to this day. The same is true with the conflict in Bosnia, Kosova, and so on.

The roots of anti-Muslim rhetoric, misunderstanding and fear of Islam are as old as Islam itself, but September 11 marked a turning point in relations between Muslims and the West. Now Muslims were clearly labelled as enemies of the West.[16] The process of enmification against Muslims accelerated in the aftermath of that tragic day. In his book, *Blaming Islam*, Bowen writes:

> When a particular narrative of us versus them circulates widely, it can be used to dehumanize huge segments of humanity. Pogroms in Russia and genocide in Europe were fueled by the poisonous *Protocol of the Elders of Zion* ... Communism and anti-Communism, twinned for decades, wound much of the newly postcolonial world into a web of intrigue and oppression. But after the fall of the Soviet Union there was an opening for a new them, a new enemy. Islam fit the bill.[17]

16. For more on the topic see Hale Afshar's 'The politics of fear: what does it mean to those who are otherized and feared?' 2013.
17. Bowen, 2012, p. 4. The *Protocol of the Elders of Zion* was a hoax document intended to describe a grand Jewish plan for aspirations of global domination.

Following the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, many Americans identified their enemy: the Muslims, who were 'out to kill the infidels'. The allies, on the other hand, became anyone who stood up in support of America that day. It was portrayed as a black and white issue. What was not made clear, however, was that among those who died in the Twin Towers were sixty Muslims.[18] Additionally, many Muslim countries stood up in support of and sympathy for the American people that same day, but those people and those voices were brushed to one side and the media turned a blind eye in favour of sensationalism and fear-mongering. The media picked up on Americans' misplaced fear and distrust, of course, and by repeatedly broadcasting the same dark images over and over, it played an important role with regards to spreading fear and making Americans, and people around the world, choose sides and draw lines between 'friends' and 'enemies', between 'good' and 'evil'.

The September 11 attacks left people bewildered and frightened for their safety. It naturally became a need for them to have an enemy, to hammer down those people that 'hated American freedom' and had committed dark acts against America. Because the hijackers had come from Muslim countries, it was easy to tar all Muslims with the same brush. Many Muslims were attacked by civilians in vengeance, and even non-Muslims (including Sikhs) who were mistaken as Muslim due to stereotypes of appearance.[19]

Without a doubt, September 11 was a dark day in human history for people all around the world, for people of all faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds. But it should not have been a day of divisions – 'us vs. them' – it should have been a day of coming together, because as events showed, the world is small and we are all in it together.

On the contrary, however, that September morning seemed to change everything forever. Thousands of years of cooperation and prosperity between the Muslims and the West were erased from people's memories. Nationalism awoke and manifested itself by uniting Americans under its banner. Unfortunately for many the underlying message that propped up these feeling of nationalism

18. See, for instance, Samuel Freedman's 'Muslims and Islam Were Part of Twin Towers' Life' in *The New York Times*, 2010.
19. See Yaccino, Schwirtz & Santora, 2012 in *The New York Times*.

was that Islam was the cause of the chaos and death, and as a result Muslims had become the new enemy. Fear filled the air, peace seemed out of the question, and conflict was becoming increasingly inevitable. The world was not the same anymore. On this note Professor of International Affairs and Islamic Studies, Esposito, writes:

> The September 11 terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon led some to signal a new clash in the twenty-first century between Islam and Western civilization. Others countered that it was a clash between the civilized world and global terrorism. For many the belief that significant progress had been made toward a better understanding of Islam and in Christian-Muslim relations seemed an illusion. September 11 re-animated ancient and more recent fears, animosities, and stereotypes.[20]

A decade and a half after the events of September 11, those fears, animosities and stereotypes show little sign of abating. In a recent experiment done in the United States, in relation to other population groups, participants rated Arabs and Muslims as less than human. As the authors themselves noted, the results of their experiment were troubling and no doubt would have implications.[21] They observed that "dehumanization of Arabs and Muslims was associated with supporting highly aggressive policies such as drone strikes in the Middle East and torture of Arabs and Muslims."[22] It should come as no surprise that Muslims are the most readily dehumanised group in America at this time. When this stage is reached, as Zimbardo noted above, people's fears and hatreds are legitimised, and of course their anti-Muslim discrimination becomes justified.

20. Esposito, 2005, pp. ix-x.
21. Kteily & Bruneau, 2015 in *The Washington Post*.
22. Ibid.

Islamophobia: Historical Truths and Misconceptions

The extent to which mainstream Muslims have been associated with the acts of an extremist minority is stunning. The number of books, articles and movies produced against Islam and Muslims are countless and the list is growing.[23] Moreover, everyday media rhetoric driven by the far right has turned anti-Muslim slurs into the acceptable norm. This is clearly seen in aggressive opposition to mosque constructions in many places in Europe and the U.S., as well recently in European and U.S. presidential and Congressional elections which show how far-reaching and mainstream Islamophobia has become today.[24]

Unsurprisingly, discrimination and feelings of hatred against Muslims have been on the rise since September 11. A survey done by the Pew Research Centre released in 2005 indicated that, "About a third of Americans (36%) say the Islamic religion is more likely to encourage violence among its followers." Additionally, a *Washington Post*–ABC News Poll released in 2006 documents the dramatic increase of negative perceptions of Islam in the United States. According to this poll, "nearly half of Americans – 46 percent – have a negative view of Islam, seven percentage points higher than in the tense months after Sept. 11, 2001."[25] A more recent poll, however, done in 2015 by HuffPost/YouGov shows that matters seem to have become worse among American populations in relation to Islam and Muslims. The poll showed that, "More than half of Americans say they have unfavorable views of Islam, and six in ten either aren't interested or don't know whether they want to learn more about the faith...Just 7 percent said they had a very favorable view of the religion, and 14 percent said they saw it somewhat favorably."[26]

Despite Islam being Europe's second largest religion, reports from Europe indicate similar statistics showing that Islamophobia in many European countries has become a political disease.[27] Even before the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings, the Paris attacks of November 13, and the San Bernardino shootings of December 2015, there was a swell

23. See *Reel Bad Arabs* by Jack Shaheen, 2006, DVD.
24. Lean, 2012, p. xii.
25. Dean & Fears, 2006 in *The Washington Post*.
26. Kaleem, 2015 in *The Huffington Post*.
27. Bari, 2012 in *Al-Jazeera*.

of Islamophobia throughout Europe.[28] This anti-Muslim sentiment has manifested itself through deliberate attacks on fellow European Muslim citizens and their local mosques. The recent arson attacks on Muslim properties and their places of worship in Germany and Sweden, for example, demonstrate just that. This kind of treatment of Muslims has been caused primarily because of the rise of right-wing nationalist movements in Europe, mainly within the E.U. countries. What these nationalist movements wilfully forget, however, is that the Muslims have always been part of the European fabric.[29]

Britain and France, to name but two countries, have depended on Muslims in the most critical points in their history, namely the two World Wars. During World War I alone, Britain had 400,000 Muslim soldiers fighting its battles (as part of the British Indian Army, largely from the Indian subcontinent), many of whom died fighting for Britain.[30] As for France, it had recruited thousands of Muslim soldiers, mainly from North Africa, and it is estimated that 80,000 of those Muslim soldiers died in the battlefield while fighting alongside fellow French soldiers.[31] It is therefore all the more saddening that post-war Britain and France, among others, have not recognised the ultimate sacrifice made by these brave men and women when dealing with the question of Islamophobia in their communities.[32]

Today, however, this political disease and the 'threat of Islam' propaganda is repeatedly being used by right-wing movements to rally people behind them for political gains.[33] Needless to say, as these right-wing movements rise, so does Islamophobia. According to an article by political analyst, Paul Hockenos, "Of all the specters haunting Europe, none are as potent – or potentially disruptive to democracy – as Islamophobia." Hockenos adds that:

> In one recent study, between 34 and 37 percent of French, Dutch, Portuguese and Danes say they have a negative opinion of Muslims. In Germany the figure is

28. Görlach, 2015 in *The World Post*. See also Dvorak, 2015 in *The Washington Post*.
29. See 'Islam: Faith and History' by Discover Islam, 2009, DVD.
30. Forgotten Heroes by *Emel* Eds., 2009.
31. See Miskē's *Muslims of France* [Online video], 2014.
32. See Gani, 2015 in *The Guardian*.
33. Bari, 2012 in *Al-Jazeera*.

> 59 percent... Policies like Switzerland's ban on minaret construction (approved by 58 percent of voters in 2009) and veil prohibitions in France, Belgium and parts of Germany violate basic rights. Increasingly derogatory popular attitudes toward Islam and Muslims translate into workplace and schoolyard discrimination, which only increases tensions.[34]

One can rightly ask where all this discrimination is coming from, what are its origins and why now? Esposito answers:

> Islamophobia did not suddenly come into being after the events of 9/11. Like anti-Semitism and xenophobia, it has long and deep historical roots. Its contemporary resurgence has been triggered by the significant influx of Muslims to the West in the late twentieth century, the Iranian revolution, hijackings, hostage taking, and other acts of terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s, attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe.[35]

As we have mentioned, misrepresentations and distortions about Islam are not new. Professor of Islamic Studies, Nasr, points out that these distortions have "a thousand-year-old history going back to monstrous biographies of the Prophet of Islam written mostly in Latin in France and Germany in the tenth and eleventh centuries."[36] This shows that such a phenomenon has its roots in medieval times, even prior to the Crusades, which later continued with anti-Ottoman rhetoric and finally culminated with the advent of Colonialism, Orientalism and Imperialism, the consequences of which to this day continue to pollute many people's knowledge about Islam and the Muslim world.[37] Western narrative, especially that of Orientalists, has been that Islam is an intolerant religion spread by the sword.

34. Hockenos, 2011 in *The Nation*.
35. As qtd. in Lean, 2012, p. x.
36. Nasr, 2004*b*, pp. xi-xii.
37. See *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* by Deepa Kumar, and *Orientalism* by Edward Said.

When we look at historical findings, however, we learn that such claims have very little basis in Islam.

In his book, *Prophets and Princes*, for example, journalist Mark Weston writes:

> The common Western belief that Islam is 'a religion of the sword' is a mistake. Muslim conquerors allowed Christians, Jews and Hindus to keep their faith because the Qur'an forbids conversion by force. The millions of Hindus, Zoroastrians, and Syrian and Coptic Christians who converted to Islam in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries did so freely because their Muslim conquerors governed more justly than any ruler they had known before.[38]

To add to this point, and regarding the dealings of Muslim rulers with their non-Muslim subjects, the nineteenth century Christian missionary, T. W. Arnold, wrote:

> ... of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Mohammedan [sic] governments towards them.[39]

38. Weston, 2008, p. 16. See also *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* by John Esposito, p. 70.
39. Arnold, 1913, p. 66.

The rights of religious minorities in Islam, especially adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, were laid down over fourteen centuries ago by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself in the form of the Constitution of Madinah, which will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 5. His actions set the precedent for his followers for all time. Of course, there have been incidents of intolerance as there have been corrupt elements, including leaders,[40] in Muslim society just as there have been in the history of any other nation or religious community. However, the stain left by this minority is relatively insignificant in comparison to the rich cultural, social and academic legacy that has been left, and continues to be left, by Muslims through the ages.

Interestingly, though, many of the Orientalists and present-day Islamophobes who seek to defame Islam and the Muslims almost always fail to mention any events regarding the intolerance and the injustices committed by their own, so called Western, mostly Christian civilisation, namely the Crusades and the Inquisitions during which thousands of Muslims and Jews (including Eastern Orthodox Christians, as was the case during the Fourth Crusade)[41] lost their lives, as well as the near annihilation of the Native

40. Two such incompetent leaders known for their personal temper and intolerance towards others were Al-Hakim (996-1020 CE) and Salim (1512-1520 CE). See Arnold, 1913, p. 66.

41. In the case of the Fourth Crusade, which was originally intended to take the Holy Lands from the Muslims and went terribly wrong, Pope Innocent III, who had launched the campaign, spoke against the Crusaders with the following words: "How, indeed, will the church of the Greeks, no matter how severely she is beset with afflictions and persecutions, return into ecclesiastical union and to a devotion for the Apostolic See, when she has seen in the Latins [the Western Christians] only an example of perdition and the works of darkness, so that she now, and with reason, detests the Latins more than dogs? As for those who were supposed to be seeking the ends of Jesus Christ, not their own ends, who made their swords, which they were supposed to use against the pagans, drip with Christian blood, they have spared neither religion, nor age, nor sex. They have committed incest, adultery, and fornication before the eyes of men. They have exposed both matrons and virgins, even those dedicated to God, to the sordid lusts of boys. Not satisfied with breaking open the imperial treasury and plundering the goods of princes and lesser men, they also laid their hands on the treasures of the churches and, what is more serious, on their very possessions. They have even ripped silver plates from the altars and have hacked them to pieces among themselves. They violated the holy places and have carried off crosses and relics" (Pope Innocent III's *Letters*, July 12, 1205. Text modified by Paul Halsall, original translation by J. Brundage).

Americans, the terrors of the KKK, and the more recent atrocities of the two World Wars, the Holocaust, or even more recently the deaths of over one million Iraqis since the U.S.-led invasion of their country.[42] For none of that dark history are Christians as a whole held accountable, and no Christian associates those heinous acts with Christianity arguing that the events do not necessarily represent the true teachings of their faith. On the other hand, somehow Islam and Muslims seem to be responsible for any such acts perpetrated by its most radical factions and are expected to vociferously denounce violence and extremism and offer their apologies.

Although Muslims are not obligated to apologise for acts that have not remotely been sanctioned by their religion and in which they have played no part, it is still worth noting that a number of prominent Muslim organisations, scholars, imams and leaders, on a national and community level, publicly denounce acts of violence. Numerous statements of condemnation have been issued often within hours of atrocities being committed.[43] But it seems that the mainstream media outlets are uninterested in these stories because they do not follow the common narrative of their coverage of Islam and Muslims. In fact, so obsessed are many media outlets with espousing the 'radical Islam' rhetoric, that all perspective seems to have been lost. A recent study showed that, since the September 11 attacks, twice as many people have been killed in the United States by white supremacist terrorists, anti-government radicals, and other non-Muslim radicals than by Muslim extremists.[44] Furthermore, even the most anti-Western militant groups that claim to act in the name of Islam, have killed far more Muslims than they have Christians, Westerners or other minorities.[45]

42. Baker, 2008 in *Reuters*.
43. Clark, 2015 in *The Huffington Post*. See also Kurzman's list of Muslim scholars' condemnations of violence and terrorism since 2001 at http://kurzman.unc.edu/islamic-statements-against-terrorism/.
44. See Shane, 2015 in *The New York Times*. See also Ybarra, 2015 in *The Washington Times*.
45. See Buchanan, 2015 in *The Independent*.

Embracing the Differences and Finding a Way Forward

The time has come for understanding: in this case an understanding of true Islam and Muslims. There is no longer a clear divide between the Muslim East and the Christian West, with many Muslims calling Europe, North America and Australia home. Professor of Islamic Studies, Ahmed Akbar, on this point says, "The twenty-first century will be the century of Islam. Muslim civilization will be central to understanding where we will be moving in to the future." And the fact that there are over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world with "about 25 million living permanently in the West and many of them making an impact on social, political, and economic life..." understanding Islam is "imperative to anyone wanting to make sense of living in the twenty-first century."[46]

There also needs to be a radical change in the way we view our world today. The West needs to be reminded that it is not comprised solely of a Judeo-Christian civilisation, as the narrative has been, but of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic civilisation, in which Islam has interacted and contributed to the West and the rest of the world as much as any other great civilisation has. Only then can we all coexist in harmony.

The alternative to coexistence is unthinkable. Xenophobia became the main cause of division among people in Europe at one stage and gave rise to the two World Wars. Europeans, in particular, had become obsessed with their next-door neighbours and viewed them with mistrust and suspicion. These feelings, of course, were further fuelled by the evils of nationalism that preached the superiority of one nation over another. Anyone who did not conform to the worldview of the nationalist was an enemy of the nation and a threat to national security. As a result, diversity found no place in such societies. And the root cause of this intolerance? It was simply the continuous propaganda against one another that demonised every European nation in the eyes of the other. Not surprisingly, however, when looking at the history of the European people, one discovers that most of them are historically relatives of one another because of their Christian heritage, but this shared heritage was not enough to stop them killing each other during the World Wars.

46. Ahmed in Miller & Kenedi (Eds.) 2002, p. 1.

If we learn anything from that dark period of history, it is that we need a paradigm shift in the way we view people that are different from us, instead of blaming them for our own faults. The world is so accessible and interconnected today that we should move to a greater level of global understanding; it should be hard to find an 'other'. In fact, Islam and Muslims are not even 'the other' considering that Islam is part of the fabric from which modern Western civilisation is woven. On this matter Umar Faruq Abd-Allah says, "Islamic civilization grew up right next door to European Christian civilization. Islam was not exotic; Islam was not foreign; Islam was not difficult to understand. Islam for Christian Europe in the Middle Ages was extremely close physically and ideologically."[47]

Islam was often seen by its neighbours, both Christian and Jewish, as the religion of prosperity. Europe had learned a great deal from the Muslims and because of that early interaction with the Muslim world, Europe gave birth to its Enlightenment.[48] In one case, a bishop of Cordoba laments the fact that his Christian subjects were so immersed in the contributions of Islam in ninth century Islamic Spain that they were forgetting about their Christian background and language, saying:

> The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to correct and form an elegant Arabic [sic]. Where is the layman who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophets or the apostles? Alas! all talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian language as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their language. For everyone who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express

47. See *Islam: Faith and History* by Discover Islam, 2009, DVD; see also USIP Special Report, 2002, p. 1.
48. See Al-Hassani's *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*, 2007.

> themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in this language than the Arabs themselves.[49]

This period of great exchanges and transformation, however, has somehow been erased from our history books only to be replaced with pages filled with stories of Islamic fundamentalism, oppression, and terrorism. In reality these concepts are foreign to Islam. Abdullah Hakim Quick, Muslim scholar and historian, says that Muslims by the very nature of their religion are against terrorism, and that is because "Islam means finding peace through submission to the will of Allah, so therefore, terrorism, trying to intimidate people in order to get your point across, or to take over their land or to drive them away, this very act... is totally against Islam and ...within Islamic law, and lifestyle, terrorism is completely forbidden."[50]

Bearing this in mind, the challenge is not, as once posed by Muslim scholar, Hamza Yusuf, whether Islam is compatible with Western values or not, but instead whether the West can truly embrace Islam.[51] And this is a very valid challenge to a so-called and self-prided multicultural and all-inclusive West.

49. As qtd. in Kumar, 2012, p. 12.
50. *Islam: Faith and History*, 2009, DVD.
51. Yusuf with Feldman in *Islam and Democracy, Is a Clash of Civilizations Inevitable!* 2004, DVD.

Chapter 2

Islam: Major Concepts and Historical Background

The Birth of Islam and the Qur'an

Islam, as we know it today, and as one of the world's monotheistic religions, has its origins in seventh-century Arabia with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the final messenger of God, preceded by Isa [Jesus] عليه السلام, Musa [Moses] عليه السلام, Ibrahim [Abraham] عليه السلام and so on.[1]

Muhammad ﷺ was born in 570 CE in the ancient city of Makkah, present-day Saudi Arabia.[2] Growing up in the Quraysh tribe as an orphan,[3] he became known for his truthfulness and sincerity, so he was often sought for his ability to arbitrate among the people. In addition to this he had a calm and contemplative nature. His character was that of a natural leader, and he was the one who brought people

1. Although Islam is not a new religion, since it is a continuation of the preceding divine messages, like Christianity and Judaism, it was during the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that God's message was completed with the revelation of the Qur'an.
2. The ancient city of Makkah is referred to in the Bible as Baca (see Psalms 84:6).
3. Muhammad's father, Abdullah, died before Muhammad ﷺ was born, and his mother, Aminah, died six years later, leaving him to be raised firstly by his paternal grandfather, Abdul Muttalib and, after his death, by his uncle, Abu Talib.

together through peaceful means. This was no easy task considering the time and place in which he was brought up.[4] In order to fully appreciate Muhammad's ﷺ character, it is necessary to set it in the context of where he was born and raised, and later how he came to be followed by people from all four corners of the globe.

In the sixth century, the Arabian Peninsula was in its worse state of degradation and social chaos. Idolatry, open prostitution, addiction to drinking, human abuse, infanticide, tribal killings and warfare had reached their apex. Although Arabs belonged to one race and spoke the same language, there was great deal of disunity. The chain of blood-feuds was never-ending; families and tribes often went to war with each other over the most trivial matters.[5] It was in this environment, chaotic and lawless, that Muhammad ﷺ was born. He was raised in a place where a person born in a 'weaker' tribe was worth less, where the strong could cruelly exterminate the weak for the slightest mistake. It was also obvious that greed and wealth at the time "had become more important than honor".[6]

Even before his prophethood, the young Muhammad ﷺ never agreed with or participated in any of the degenerate behaviour that he witnessed around him.[7] Instead, he retreated to the mountains of Makkah for solace and to try to make sense of all that was happening around him and what would become of his people. It was one night in a cave in Makkah in 610 CE that he was embraced by the Archangel Gabriel [Jibril] عليه السلام and commanded to "read" (also translated as recite, reflect, contemplate).

That night, just like his predecessors, Muhammad ﷺ had been entrusted with a revelation from God given to him by the Archangel Gabriel [Jibril] عليه السلام. He was forty at the time, and more importantly he was an illiterate man. The revelation he received that day in the Cave of Hira, to where he used to retreat, continued to come down to him for the next twenty-three years of his life. This revelation is called the *Qur'an*, believed by Muslims to be the exact Word of God,

4. See Nadwi, 2005, pp. 16-21.
5. Zarabozo, 1999, p. 38-41.
6. Weston, 2008, p. 18.
7. IIPH Eds., 2004, p. 10.

and that message is known as *Islam*. The followers of this way of life are called *Muslims*.[8]

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it literally means something to 'be read or recited'. As the Prophet ﷺ received this revelation from God through Archangel Gabriel عليه السلام, he recited it to his followers who "would eagerly learn it and in turn recite it to others," writes Abdel Haleem.[9] As the Qur'an was being sent down to the Prophet ﷺ, and as he was teaching it to his Companions,[10] they in turn memorised it and others wrote it down. It is recorded that there were twenty-nine scribes from the inner circle of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ who wrote down the Qur'an "in the form of uncollected pieces".[11] It was only two years later, after the death of the Prophet ﷺ when the early Muslims for the first time agreed on collecting and writing down the Qur'an in book form. This decision came about after a major battle where Muslims lost a great number of those who had known the Qur'an by heart. Fearing the loss of any Qur'anic part with the possible loss of memorisers in the future, Caliph Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه ordered that a written copy of the whole of the Qur'an be made. It was twenty years later that Caliph Uthman رضي الله عنه ordered the making of other copies from this one in order to be distributed to other parts of the Muslim world.[12] Over fourteen centuries later, the Qur'an is:

> ...perhaps the most recited (as well as read) book in the world. Certainly it is the world's most memorized book,

8. Sakr, 2004, p. 5. The name *Muhammadan* frequently used by Orientalists is a misnomer simply because it suggests that Muslims worship Muhammad ﷺ rather than God. It also suggests that Muhammad ﷺ was the originator of this religion, which is simply not the case because Muhammad ﷺ did not bring a new message to humanity, he only re-called people to the same message that Isa [Jesus], Musa [Moses] and the other prophets عليهم السلام had called their people to.
9. Abdel Haleem, 2010, p. xv.
10. The term Companions (usually capitalised), in Arabic *Sahabah*, specifically refers to the disciples, and the family of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. As a sign of respect, the names of the male Companions are followed by رضي الله عنه which is *'radiAllahu anhu'* (meaning may Allah be pleased with him) and the names of the female Companions (including the wives and daughters of the Prophet ﷺ) are followed by رضي الله عنها which is *'radiAllahu anha'* (meaning may Allah be pleased with her).
11. Abdel Haleem, 2010, p. xvi.
12. Ibid.

> and possibly the one that exerts the most influence on those who read it. So great was Muhammad's regard for its contents that ... he considered it the only major miracle God worked through him – God's "standing miracle" as he called it. That he himself, unschooled to the extent that he was unlettered ... and could barely write his name, could have produced a book that provides the ground plan of all knowledge and at the same time is grammatically perfect and without poetic peer – this, Muhammad, and with him all Muslims, are convinced defies belief.[13]

Regarding allegations that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ authored the Qur'an, scholar Maurice Bucaille writes:

> How could a man, from being illiterate, become the most important author, in terms of literary merits, in the whole of Arabic literature? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at that time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncement on the subject?[14]

According to Muslim thought, the Qur'an is a book of guidance, not only for Muslims but for all of humanity. It also introduces a shift in human thinking, thus serving as a means for positive transformation for those who study it seriously. Orientalist and Professor of Arabic, Margoliouth writes:

> It [the Qur'an] has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character. It first transformed a number of heterogeneous desert tribes of the Arabian Peninsula into a nation of heroes, and then proceeded to create the vast politico-religious organizations of the Muhammadan [sic] world which are one of the great forces with which Europe and the East have to reckon today.[15]

13. Smith, 1991, pp. 231-232.
14. Bucaille, 2003, p. 132.
15. Margoliouth, Introduction to J. M Rodwell's *The Koran*. As qtd. in Rodwell, 1876, n. p.

Unlike other Holy Scriptures, the Qur'an remains exactly the same today as it did from the time it was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. There are no versions or variants – just one Arabic text that has been completely preserved. The Institute for Koranforschung, set up in the University of Munich (Germany), collected over forty thousand complete and incomplete ancient copies of the Qur'an. After some fifty years of research, a report was published about which it is said:

> Shortly before the Second World War, a preliminary and tentative report was published that there are of course copying mistakes in the manuscripts of the Qur'an, but no variants. During the war, American bombs fell on this Institute, and all was destroyed, director, personnel, library and all... But this much is proved – that there are no variants in the Qur'an in copies dating from the first to the present centuries.[16]

Major Concepts of Islam

The word Islam comes from the Arabic root-word *salaam* which means 'surrender' (in order to achieve peace). And this is what the essence of the message of Islam is about: to surrender oneself completely to the will of Allah (God), and Allah alone, in order to achieve peace.[17] This can mean achieving a peace of mind, peace with the self, with the people around us, with the environment, and so on, which according to Islam can only be done after achieving peace with Allah (by following His commandments), the Creator of the universe and everything in it. On this point, Ziauddin Sardar writes:

> Islam presents itself as a rationally satisfying faith. And the faithful acquire genuine faith only after they have pondered and reflected upon the 'signs of God' as manifested in the laws of nature, the material universe and personal experience of the Divine.[18]

16. Hamidullah, *"The Practicability of Islam in this World"*, Islamic Cultural Forum, Tokyo, Japan, April 1977, p. 15. As qtd. in Al-Azami, 2003, p. 24.
17. Sakr, 2004, p. 5.
18. Sardar, 2007, p. 3.

The legal sources of Islam are the Qur'an, known as the Book of Allah, and the *hadith*, which include the sayings, deeds and approvals of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Moreover, Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the last of the prophets, best embodied the message of the Qur'an. Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim, man or woman, to follow his way of life, known as the *Sunnah*.

The fundamental beliefs of Islam are:

- belief in One God (the Oneness of Allah, in other words, that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah);[19]
- belief in the Prophets of Allah (all of them from the time of Adam عليه السلام with Muhammad ﷺ as the final messenger);
- belief in the revealed books of Allah (including the Psalms, Torah, Gospels, Qur'an in their original forms);
- belief in angels;
- predestination;
- the Day of Resurrection.

The five pillars of Islam, on the other hand, are a Muslim's commitment to his faith and are prescribed by the Qur'an as:

- *Shahadah*: The profession of faith (There is no one worthy of worship except for Allah and that Muhammad ﷺ is His final prophet);[20]
- *Salah*: To perform the five daily prayers;
- *Zakat*: Alms-giving;
- *Sawm*: Fasting during the month of Ramadan;
- *Hajj*: Pilgrimage to Makkah.

In addition to acts of worship to Allah, Islam also puts great emphasis on fulfilling the rights of other human beings and being of service to others. According to the teachings of Islam, every human

19. It is important to point out that Muslims do not perceive God in human terms, and most argue that it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend an Infinite God who is responsible for everything that happens in the universe. The only way to understand God, according to Muslim scholars, is through His attributes. Additionally, although usually referred to as *He*, in Islam God has no gender (Sardar, 2007, pp. 1-2).
20. One can simply enter into the fold of Islam by sincerely making this declaration, called the *Shahadah* meaning to 'witness' or 'testify'.

is an honoured being; no matter what their status or background is, they are all equal in the sight of Allah.[21] Therefore, the life, the honour and the property of every human being living in an Islamic society, Muslim or non-Muslim, is considered sacred. Racism, sexism or any other form of prejudice or discrimination against others is unacceptable in Islam.[22] In fact dealing fairly and equitably towards all people is a Qur'anic command:

> *"O you who believe! Stand up firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not hatred of a people invite you to act inequitably; act justly, that is nearer to piety, and be conscious of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is aware of all that you do."* (Qur'an 5:8)

In addition to preserving human rights and acting justly, Muslims are also encouraged to contribute to society through gaining knowledge, both theological and worldly in order for self-growth and well as advancement of society. History bears testament to the fact that Islamic civilisation left legacies in the fields of philosophy, technology, medicine, geography, history, language, literature, mathematics, physics, art and astronomy. It was these that formed the foundation of the advancements we have made today.[23] So why does Islam carry the image of being one that is outdated and out of touch with reality?

Perhaps among the reasons why Islam and Muslims are looked on as strange by many Westerners is because, in a general sense, religion does not play a dominant role in the everyday life of a Westerner today. For Muslims the opposite is true: Islam is life and life is Islam; in other words, there is no division between secular life and the sacred, and that Way of Life, known as the *Shariah*, governs a Muslim's everyday affairs, in and out of the home, work or place of worship.

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21. See *Appendix A*.
22. See, for example, the Prophet's ﷺ Last Sermon in which he says, "...All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action..."
23. See Ahsan's *Muslim Heritage and the 21st Century*, 2002.

The Misunderstood Shariah[24]

Every group of people, be it a small community or a vast nation, needs a code of conduct by which to abide. Through the passage of time, human beings have realised that unless there are laws or rules that define the boundaries of our behaviour, it is impossible for us to live a peaceful and harmonious life. It is only when we have a set of regulations that protect our rights that we can flourish as a society, achieve well-being and attain our higher ideals. This is a part of human nature and one that almost everyone would agree with. Thus the question arises: who is qualified to define what those laws and norms should be?

In Islam, Muslims believe that Allah is the Lawgiver as explained by Professor of Islamic Law, 'Abd ar-Rahman Doi:

> Shari'ah is an Arabic word meaning the road to be followed. Literally it means the 'way to a watering place'. It is not only the path leading to Allah, but the path shown by Allah, the Creator Himself, through His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In Islam, Allah alone is the Sovereign and it is He Who has the right to ordain a path for the guidance of mankind. Thus it is only Shari'ah that liberates man from servitude to other than Allah. The absolute knowledge which is required to lay down a path for human life is not possessed by any group of people.[25]

Today however, much of what has been written about Shariah in the West, has been grossly twisted and exaggerated or reduced to nothing more than an outdated and barbaric penal code by which Muslims inflict punishment. On this note, Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Tariq Ramadan, says:

> The penal sphere is not the be-all and end-all of the Shari'a. It does not consist of adding prohibition to

24. There are many versions of how the term is spelled. I have adopted the word *Shariah* instead of shari'a, shareeah, and so on, but those versions are present as well when used in various quotes.
25. Doi & Clarke, 2008, p. 23.

> prohibition, and of reprimanding transgressors in the most exemplary manner. The Shari'a aims at the liberation of man and not merely of whittling down liberties. The Islamic model must not be confused with the destruction that has been perpetrated by certain dictators in the name of the Shari'a.[26]

In fact:

> The ideal code of conduct or pure way of life which is the Shari'ah has much wider scope and purpose than an ordinary legal system in the Western sense of the word. The Shari'ah, through this process, aims at regulating the relationship of human beings with Allah and with each other. This is the reason why Shari'ah law cannot be separated from Islamic ethics.[27]

The Qur'an and the hadith are the two main sources of the Shariah. The consensus of learned men and jurists (*ijma*) can be considered the third source of Shariah, about matters which are unclear in the Qur'an and hadith. The fourth source is analogical deductions (*qiyas*), whereby scholars can derive rulings from the revealed texts to cope with the changing needs and requirements of society. In this way, the Shariah is not a rigid set of rules that can become outdated, rather a core set of inviolable and timeless principles balanced with the flexibility to remain applicable and relevant in every culture, time and place. This is why often the Shariah is not called an Islamic law, but a diverse legal tradition containing laws and interpretations.[28]

Despite claims to the contrary, the Shariah is not incompatible with democracy or contradictory to Western constitutions. In fact the U.S. Constitution and Shariah have much in common; at their heart being concepts like perfect union, establishment of justice, ensuring domestic tranquillity, providing for the common defence, promoting the general welfare, securing liberty, protection of human rights, and so on. Moreover, the Shariah explicitly addresses the rights of elders,

26. Ramadan, 2001, p. 47.
27. Doi & Clarke, 2008, p. 29.
28. Winter, 2014 [Online video].

of neighbours, of women, of children, of the poor, of travellers, of prisoners, and even of animals and trees. In other words, the Shariah exists to ensure that there is fairness and equity in the relationship between a person and his Lord, and in the relationships between individuals and various groups of people, of all colours, creeds and religions. As the fourteenth century scholar, Ibn Qayyim, wrote:

> Verily the Shariah is founded upon wisdom and welfare for the servants in this life and the afterlife. In its entirety it is justice, mercy, benefit and wisdom. Every matter which abandons justice for tyranny, mercy for cruelty, benefit for corruption, and wisdom for foolishness is not a part of the Shariah even if it was introduced therein by an interpretation.[29]

Having laid out the basic principles of Islam, it is worth spending some time looking at how it spread from its humble beginnings in seventh century Arabia to become a global religion that impacts on all of our lives today.

The Spreading of Islam and its Contributions to the World

Even though Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula during the time of the Prophet ﷺ and immediately after his death in 632 CE, it was during the seventh and eighth centuries that Islam expanded to the Near East, North Africa, Spain, India and the Far East. Most of this expansion was achieved by the early Caliphates starting in the seventh century and continued under the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Seljuk, Mughal and later Ottoman dynasties. These, in fact, were some of the largest and most powerful empires in the world at the time. So how was Islam able to spread so rapidly from its origin in seventh century Arabia to an empire stretching from Spain to China within a few hundred years?

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the early Caliphs set about establishing the pattern for the organisation and administration of the Islamic state. Their style of governance was

29. Al-Jawziyyah, 1973 (vol. 1), p. 333.

simple and unworldly and they ruled with the justice and mercy set out in the Shariah.[30] In this way, the community of the faithful, the *Ummah* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was imbued with the essence of Islam within their hearts as well as the prosperity that comes from good governance and harmony within society. As a united body they became the vehicle for the great and very rapid expansion of Islam through conquests and trade.[31]

Contrary to the widely accepted belief that Islam was spread by the sword, Muslims did not actually seek to forcibly convert people to Islam. In fact, conversions were initially slow and it was not until the eleventh century that large numbers of Christians were converting to Islam.[32] In the majority of instances, Islam was willingly embraced by the natives of the conquered lands because of the exemplary character of the Muslims and the simplicity of the Islamic doctrine. In some instances, conquered people not only adopted this new religion, they also adopted the Arabic language of their occupiers and their ways of life.[33] Esposito notes that:

> In time, through a process of conversion and assimilation, language and culture, state and society were Arabized and Islamized. Arabic became the language of government as well as the lingua franca of what today constitutes North Africa and much of the Middle East. Islamic belief and values constituted the official norm and reference point for personal and public life.[34]

Egypt is a specific case in point, where by the ninth century, most of the Coptic Christians not only accepted Islam, but they also adopted Arabic as their own language. In the words of T. W. Arnold, these Coptic populations in Egypt peacefully welcomed their Muslim invaders since by that time they were tired of and "hated the Byzantine rule not only for its oppressive administration, but also –

30. See Nadwi, 2005, pp. 33-78.
31. Esposito, 2005, p. 38.
32. Ibid. p. 57.
33. See *Islam: A Short History* by Karen Armstrong; *Taking Back Islam* by Michael Wolfe (Ed.); *Prophets and Princes* by Mark Weston.
34. Esposito, 2005, p. 40.

and chiefly – on account of the bitterness of the theological rancour," adding that the Muslim conquest had brought to them "a freedom of religious life such as they had not enjoyed for a century," and that the Muslim commander at the time, Amr ibn al-As, on payment of the tribute,

> left them in undisturbed possession of their churches and guaranteed to them autonomy in all ecclesiastical matters, thus delivering them from the continual interference that have been so grievous a burden under the previous rule; he laid his hands on none of the property of the churches and committed no acts of spoliation or pillage.[35]

This feeling was echoed by the natives of many conquered lands. Islam was able to spread even without conquests as was the case with Indonesia, among other places in the Malay archipelago. Contrary to the calumnious narrative of many Orientalists, not a single Muslim conquest took place there. The people of Indonesia, in this case, accepted Islam in masses, mainly because of their friendly interactions with Muslim traders from Arab lands and beyond. According to some of the earliest sources, Muslims traders were present in the region right after the *hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, in the early seventh century.[36]

Wherever Islam spread, it had a positive and reviving affect on the indigenous people. The incoming Muslims respected the libraries and scholars of the places they went to including Egypt, Persia and Greece that were known for their rich heritage. The Muslim scholars preserved, translated and developed a great deal of ancient works.

> Most of the important philosophical and scientific works of Aristotle; much of Plato and the Pythagorean school; and the major works of Greek astronomy, mathematics and medicine...were all rendered into Arabic...As a result, Arabic became the most important scientific language of the world for many centuries and

35. Arnold, 1913, p. 83.
36. Ibid, p. 271.

> the depository of much of the wisdom and the sciences of antiquity. The achievement of scholars working in the Islamic tradition went far beyond translation and preservation of ancient learning. These scholars built upon and developed the ancient heritage before passing it on to the West...Many crucial systems such as algebra, the Arabic numerals, and the very concept of the zero ... were formulated by Muslim scholars and shared with medieval Europe. Sophisticated instruments that would make possible the later European voyages of discovery were invented or developed, including the astrolabe, the quadrant and navigational charts and maps.[37]

This Golden Age of Islam lasted until the thirteenth century after which the Islamic Empire began to lose some of its centres of power to invaders, such the loss of Cordova in 1236 to Christian forces and Baghdad in 1258 to the Mongols. The Islamic Empire was further eroded by the rise of European Colonialism in the sixteenth century culminating in the abolition of the Islamic Caliphate in the early twentieth century.

The early to mid-twentieth century was a period of great upheaval globally. There were territorial changes as empires from the Ottoman to the British fell, decolonisation occurred and new nation states emerged with their own political and economic troubles. Two World Wars depleted the resources of many nations, not least in terms of the labour force. It was against this tumultuous background that the scene was set for global migrations (mainly from East to West), the like of which had not been seen before and which continue, for one reason or another, to this day. It is as a result of these migrations that Muslims can now be found all over the world.

Islam and the West

Although recent migratory patterns have resulted in a large influx of Muslims to the West, Islam actually reached the West within eighty

37. See 'How did the spread of Islam affect the World?' by Discover Islam Eds., 2004.

years of the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The first major Muslim entrance into Western Europe took place in 711 CE when the troops of General Tariq ibn Ziyad from North Africa defeated the Visigoths in the Iberian Peninsula.[38] Having taken over most of the peninsula without any significant effort, the Muslims made this part of Europe an extension of the Umayyad Caliphate, later a separate caliphate, and called it Al-Andalusia. Muslims were to remain there until 1492 when the Inquisitions forced everyone to either convert to Roman Catholicism or burn at the stake. As a result most of the Muslims and Jews fled the peninsula and scattered around the globe, where many of them, as historical evidence suggests, moved to Ottoman lands but also went as far as the Americas, among other places.

Some sources indicate a Muslim presence in the Americas since the early 1300s,[39] others record their presence with the coming of the first Europeans to the 'New World' and the first voyages of Christopher Columbus.[40] Many of these sea voyages "to the 'New World' were made between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries when an estimated ten million African slaves came to America" many of whom were Muslim.[41] Moreover, according to Professor Amber Haque, in the eighteenth century, the Moors from Spain were reported to have been living in the Carolinas and Florida.[42] However, according to Hamid Mowlana, Professor of International Relations, "Since the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain and Portugal, the role of European Muslims in the voyages to the American continent was hardly mentioned in Western literature."[43] Peter Manseau notes that Muslims arrived to the United States:

> before the founding of the United States — not just a few, but thousands. They have been largely overlooked because they were not free to practice their faith. They were not free themselves and so they were for the most

38. The place where he first landed was called *Jabal Tariq* (the Mountain of Tariq), now known as Gibraltar.
39. Haque, 2004, p. 46.
40. Mowlana, 2010.
41. Haque, 2004, p. 46.
42. Ibid.
43. Mowlana, 2010.

> part unable to leave records of their beliefs. They left just enough to confirm that Islam in America is not an immigrant religion lately making itself known, but a tradition with deep roots here, despite being among the most suppressed in the nation's history.[44]

Adding that, "The story of Islam in early America is not merely one of isolated individuals. An estimated twenty percent of enslaved Africans were Muslims..."

Today, although often ignored by the mainstream media, the early Muslim presence in the United States is undeniable, but this is a different topic altogether.[45] The main point here is that there has been a relationship between Islam and the West since the earliest days of Islam. While that relationship is currently somewhat precarious, in no small part due to the dark events of September 11, and what followed afterwards, it would be prudent to ask what the nature of the Muslim/non-Muslim relationship has been like in the past. Esposito provides an insight into this relationship; historically speaking, Muslim-Christian relations were generally stable up to the time of the Crusades, and then worsened with the rise of the Inquisitions. However, this is not to say that relations of cooperation and coexistence were forever severed with these devastating events. Outside of the Holy Lands (where the Crusades were fought) and the Iberian Peninsula (where the Inquisitions took place), Muslims continued to co-exist harmoniously with their Jewish and Christian neighbours. In fact most of them contributed to and even took part in the development of what was to become Christian Europe.[46]

It is on the basis of this, that Bernard Lewis (whose opinion of Islam and Muslims has often fluctuated) admits that Islam and Muslims should not be viewed as passive objects to be acted upon, but rather as active historical players who share commonalities with Christendom and are deeply rooted in Western civilisation.[47]

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44. Manseau, 2015 in *The New York Times*.
45. For more on the topic, see *Deeper Roots* by Abdullah Hakim Quick, 1996.
46. See Esposito, 2005, pp. 16-73.
47. Lewis, 2001, p. 12.

Islam Today

According to a comprehensive demographic study conducted in more than 200 countries, "there are 1.57 billion Muslims of all ages living in the world today, representing 23% of an estimated 2009 world population of 6.8 billion.[48] According to these findings, "While Muslims are found on all five inhabited continents, more than 60% of the global Muslim population is in Asia and about 20% is in the Middle East and North Africa." The study adds that, "More than 300 million Muslims, or one-fifth of the world's Muslim population, live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion. These minority Muslim populations are often quite large. Such examples are India, China, Russia, and so on."[49] In addition, beside the known Muslim world, Muslim populations today have a significant presence in Europe, North and Latin America as well.

Diversity and Differences in the Muslim World

Far from being a homogenous entity, Muslims are as varied as any other demographic group. Their faith is the common thread that binds them, but they are very distinct and diverse in their origins, ethnicities, cultures, languages, traditions, and so on. This is to be expected given the numerous countries that Muslims now call home and the variety of cultures and worldviews which they are exposed to. As Professor of Islamic Studies, Akbar Ahmed, puts it, "Islam is a mosaic. Spread over the globe, with its societies speaking different languages, its peoples living in distinct political cultures, while aware of the unity of faith and vision that binds all Muslims, Islam can only be understood in its diversity."[50]

Under the umbrella of Islam, there are two main groups: Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims. The Sunnis make up about 87 percent of Muslims around the world, and they too are divided into sub-groups. The Shi'a as a minority make up about 13 percent of Muslim populations mainly centred in Iran, Iraq, India and Pakistan.[51]

48. Pew, 2009, p. 1.
49. Ibid.
50. Ahmed in Miller & Kenedi (Eds.), 2002, p. 3.
51. Pew, 2009, p. 1.

The origins of the Sunni-Shi'a split can be traced back to the period just after the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ when issues of succession arose, as Professor of International Relations, Mirbagheri explains:

> For Sunnis the four successive rulers of Muslims after Muhammad, the Rightly Guided Caliphs, [Abu Bakr], Omar, Othman and Ali were all pious men and assumed the leadership of the community in the right order and in a proper manner. The Shi'as, however, dispute that and believe Ali, the fourth successor and the cousin and the son-in-law of Muhammad, should have succeeded the Prophet immediately upon his death. The three intervening caliphs, therefore, Shi'as believe, usurped the leadership of the community by depriving Ali of guiding the Muslim community.[52]

The split was an unofficial one until it was formalised in 1501 when "Shah Ismail I established the Safavid Dynasty in Persia and declared Shi'ism as the official religion of the state," as distinct from their opposing power, the Ottomans, who were Sunni Muslim.[53]

Although not a separate sect of Islam per se, Sufism represents the mystical dimension of Islam and a follower of this tradition is known as a Sufi. Sufis can be Shi'a or Sunni[54] and can be found in North Africa, Turkey, the Balkans, Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Iran, and South, East and Central Asia. Sufis make up no more than five percent of Muslims around the world today.[55] It is important to note here that, although there are some obvious differences between the Muslim groups discussed above, at the end of the day, they all unite under the banner of Islam, believing in the same God, following the same prophet, using the same text, the Qur'an, and all aim to fulfil the same pillars of faith. Their differences are never to be used as reasons for divisions among themselves because there exist more commonalities between them than there are differences, as the

52. Ibid.
53. Mirbagheri, 2012, p. 16.
54. See *The Heart of Islam* by Seyyed Nasr, 2004*b*, p. 63.
55. Schwartz, 2011 in *The Huffington Post*.

Qur'an advises, "*Hold fast to the rope of Allah all together, and do not separate*" (Qur'an 3:103) and "*Be not like those who split up and differed after the Clear Signs came to them*" (Qur'an 3:105).[56]

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Having gained a brief overview of the basic precepts of Islam and how it has developed over the past fourteen hundred years, attention can now be focused on the subject of study, Conflict Resolution within Islam.

56. To this end, there have been efforts within the Muslim World to promote inter and intra faith harmony and to highlight commonalities between religious groups. Most notable among these is The Amman Message, which is essentially a statement issued in 2004 by King Hussein of Jordan calling for tolerance and unity mainly in the Muslim world. Later on, a three-point verdict was issued by 200 prominent Muslim scholars from over fifty countries, primarily focusing on issues of defining who is a Muslim, common grounds and issues related to delivering *fatwas*. It was modified and ratified by the International Islamic Fiqh Academy in June 2006. For further details and to read the document, see www.ammanmessage.com.

Part Two

War and Peace in Islam

Chapter 3

War, Peace and Everything in Between

Peace as the Norm

Peace, as most scholars in the field would agree, is a very difficult concept to define given that humans have paid far more attention to war than to peace. In fact, peace has often been ignored by the prevailing culture of war, especially in the last century, and until very recently in Western academia, 'peace studies' has not been a recognised field of research. An online study of the prominent *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for instance, produces more than 120 entries on war and only twenty related to peace.[1] Under such circumstances, one may rightly ask as to how we should define peace.

The instinctive response when asked for a definition of peace is the opposite of war or the absence of it. Indeed a dictionary definition of peace is given as "freedom from war and violence, especially when people live and work together happily without disagreements."[2] However, true peace is a deeper concept than simply the absence of a condition, just as light is a more complex concept than simply the absence of darkness. Johan Galtung, a peace studies pioneer, described

1. Gittings, 2012, p. 6.
2. Online Cambridge Dictionary, 2011.

peace as the "'absence of personal violence' to a much more ample definition of the 'absence of structural violence' or, put positively, as the existence of violence-free 'social justice.'"[3] Journalist and researcher, Gittings writes in further detail:

> The definition of peace may be complicated, but it is a condition of life without which we would not continue to exist. As the Greek historian Thucydides put it long ago, peace brings its own 'honours and splendours and countless other advantages, which are free from danger and would take as many words to enumerate as when we describe the evils of war.'[4]

A conceptual approach to peace is one which begins with its individual aspect; a peace that comes from within, in other words an "inner peace" that radiates out to surrounding humanity, known as "outer peace".[5] In the words of peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh, "without being peace, we cannot do anything for peace. If we cannot smile, we cannot help other people smile."[6] This idea of emotions and moods having a domino effect on the people around us and the concept of spreading inner peace has been echoed in the words of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, "When you smile to your brother's face, it is a charity."[7]

Regarding the concept of peace in Islam, Professor Abdul Aziz Said notes that "there is a deep resonance between Islam and Western civilization," adding that like "Christians and Jews, Muslims share a common calling to work for peace, as enjoined by the Qur'an."[8] In order to promote and achieve peace on earth, Allah has set out a number of principles and guidelines in the Qur'an for Muslims to implement at every level of society. These include:[9]

3. As qtd. in Gittings, 2012, p. 2.
4. Gittings, 2012, p. 4.
5. Ibid, p. 2.
6. Hanh, 1987, p. 82.
7. Hadith in *Jami at-Tirmidhi*.
8. As qtd. in USIP Special Report, 2002, p. 2.
9. Adapted from El Diwani, 2003.

1) Equality: In Islam, no one is superior to another on the basis of skin colour, race, wealth, lineage, education or appearance. The only criterion on which the Creator judges people is piety and God-consciousness (*taqwa*) as He says in the Qur'an:

> *"The noblest among you in Allah's sight is the one with the most taqwa."* (Qur'an 49:13)

Thus no one is at an unfair advantage because of what they have been born with or have acquired during their lives. Since much conflict finds its roots in one set of human beings perceiving themselves to be superior to another, there is no room for conflict on this basis in Islam.

2) *Justice*: Meaningful peace cannot be achieved without justice, as injustice paves the way for all manner of social ills and eventually social chaos. The Islamic sense of justice demands that all Muslims deal justly with others in all circumstances and not allow their emotions to cloud their reasoning:

> *"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witness to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety."* (Qur'an 5:8)

3) *Self-defence*: Peace and justice are ideals that have to be defended should the need arise. Islam does not allow its adherents to stand by passively while those ideals are attacked, otherwise this lack of defensive action in itself will lead to oppression and injustice. The Qur'an is explicit about this matter:

> *"To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid."* (Qur'an 22:39)

4) *Peaceful Disposition to Others*: The Qur'an states in several places that Muslims are forbidden to open hostilities, start aggression or obstruct the peace:

> *"Fight in the Way of Allah against those who fight you but do not go beyond the limits. Allah does not love those who go beyond limits."* (Qur'an 2:190)

The Qur'an also reminds that:

> *"It may well be that Allah will restore the love between you and those of them who are now your enemies. Allah is All-Powerful. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Allah does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in faith or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. Allah loves those who are just."* (Qur'an 60:7-8)

As far as the Prophet ﷺ is concerned on this matter, he is recorded to have said, "The most hated person in the sight of Allah is the most quarrelsome person."[10]

5) *Cooperation with Others for the Good of Mankind*: Islam recognises diversity and the need for co-operation among nations and different cultures in order to understand each other and achieve harmony. As the Qur'an states:

> *"If your Lord had so willed, He would have made all people a single community, but they will continue to have their differences."* (Qur'an 11:118)

and advises to:

> *"Cooperate with one another in goodness and piety; and do not cooperate with one another in sin and transgression."* (Qur'an 5:2)

> *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous*

10. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

> *of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).*" (Qur'an 49:13)

It is obvious from the above verses of the Qur'an that Islam holds the establishment and maintenance of peace as a basic cornerstone of the faith, not least because it "was the condition of life in Paradise, the original designated residence of humankind, before it was replaced by enmity and war on earth, the place of exile for humanity after it succumbed to the temptation of defiance by Satan."[11] It is this divine condition that Muslims are commanded to strive for at every level of their daily lives, from inner peace to harmony within the home, society and the world.

The Arabic word *salaam*, meaning 'peace', which is used daily by Muslims to greet one another, has the same root (S-L-M) as the word *Islam*, meaning 'submission to Allah'. Muslims believe that it is only by submitting oneself completely to the will of the one and only Creator and following His commands, that a person can achieve true peace, which is the state of Islam. Regarding this, the Prophet ﷺ said, "As-Salaam (The Source of Peace) is indeed a name from the Names of Allah, which Allah has placed upon the earth, therefore spread salaam amongst yourselves in abundance."[12] Mirbagheri points out here that, the peace that comes from submitting to the will of the Giver of Peace "transcends the silence of guns and engulfs a more pervasive, all-inclusive and deeper precept that permeates every level of existence." He further adds that by this "outlook individual peace is not separated from social and political peace, and all facets of peace, including the spiritual and political, are viewed as interdependent."[13]

This brings us back to the concept of inner peace achieved through submission to Allah because "there will be no peace in the world unless the individual is at peace with himself [or herself]. Therefore, to establish a firm basis for international peace, one must first implant peace in man's innermost conscience."[14] And that is the

11. Mirbagheri, 2012, p. 82.
12. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
13. Mirbagheri, 2012, pp. 82-83.
14. Qutb, 1977, p. 16.

purpose of Islam: to fundamentally transform the human race starting at the grass roots with each individual responsible for his own inner dimension. Inner peace cannot be learned from a course of study nor can it be mastered overnight. It is a state of higher awareness that is achieved through conscious and meaningful experiences as well as contemplation.

There is much for the thinking person to contemplate upon in this universe:

> Islam is the religion of unity in this great universe, a unity which comprises all elements, from a single particle to the most advanced species...It is the unity of all existence; inanimate, plant, animal and human. All activities in the cosmos are included and integrated in this unity...Islam finds unity in the planets when following their eternal laws as well as in souls when responding to their natural inclinations to acquire knowledge and implement justice... There is unity among all living beings. ...[Therefore], Islam begins by establishing the principle of the oneness of God as it is from Him that life issues and unto [Him] that it returns.[15]

There comes a certain security, and consequently inner peace, from knowing that there is one God,[16] Creator of the universe, who has created everything to follow specific laws, be it an electron that orbits the nucleus or a planet that orbits the sun. In every system in the universe, from the atomic to the galactic, there is perfect balance and harmony. And where there is balance, there is peace.

> *"(Allah) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence). The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed; And the herbs and the trees – both (alike) prostrate in adoration. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of*

15. Ibid, p. 5.
16. See Qur'an 21:22; 112:1-4, etc.

> *Justice), in order that you may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance."* (Qur'an 55:1-8)

It was in this state of balance that Allah created Adam ﷺ and Hawwa [Eve] from a single soul and from them descended all of humanity:

> *"O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence Allah, through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you."* (Qur'an 4:1)

Much of the rest of that Qur'anic chapter goes on to outline the rights of women, orphans and family members in general as well as equitable laws regarding marriage, property and inheritance in some detail.[17] Incidentally, Islam gave women legal rights long before their Western counterparts.[18]

Having reminded people that they share a common bloodline, Allah reminds people that they also share a common faith because every prophet of God called his people to the worship of One True Lord:

> *"The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah – that which We have sent by inspiration to thee – and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely, that you should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein..."* (Qur'an 42:13)

By establishing common ground between people, Islam opens the doors to peace and understanding among people of all walks of life.

17. Ali, 1989, p. 182.
18. Jones, 2004, p. 6224.

War as the Exception

In as much as it is difficult to define peace, the concept of war today seems to be equally complex. Various encyclopaedias and dictionaries define war as an armed conflict between states or nations, but war does not always have to play out on the battlefield. In fact it can simply be a war of words or ideologies, which can be thought of as:

> ...a clash of visions, concepts, and images, and – especially – the interpretation of them. They are, indeed, genuine wars, even though the physical violence might be minimal, because they serve a political, socio-cultural, or economic purpose, and they involve hostile intentions or hostile acts. Wars of ideas can assume many forms, but they tend to fall into four general categories (though these are not necessarily exhaustive): (a) intellectual debates, (b) ideological wars, (c) wars over religious dogma, and (d) advertising campaigns. All of them are essentially about power and influence, just as with wars over territory and material resources, and their stakes can run very high indeed.[19]

Regardless of the evolutions in the nature of warfare over the centuries, one fact remains unchanged: peace is the ideal state while war is the exception. As Muhammad Malik of the Institute of Islamic Knowledge writes, "Peace is the preamble to the principle of harmony in the universe, the laws of life and the origin of man, while war is the result of violations of harmony such as injustice, despotism and corruption."[20]

We have seen in the previous section that Islam has laid down certain principles in an effort to eliminate the root causes of conflict, such as inequality, injustice and oppression, and has advocated peace and cooperation to achieve these ends. Nevertheless, Islam does recognise that ill-intentioned people may wish to disturb the peace, create mischief and spread the very things that Islam stands against: inequality, injustice and oppression. It is under these circumstances,

19. Echevarria, 2008, p. v.
20. Malik, 2008, p. 21.

and only these circumstances, that Muslims are permitted, and indeed required, to defend themselves, their families and their faith from transgression, as the Qur'an says:

> *"To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged – and verily Allah is Most Powerful for their aid."* (Qur'an 22:39)

In other words, Allah gives Muslims permission to fight when a) they are being fought against and b) when their basic human rights have been denied. The next verse goes on to explain in more detail about what those rights are and what constitutes an injustice that would permit fighting in self-defence:

> *"(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right – (for no cause) except that they say, 'Our Lord is Allah'. Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another there would surely have pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure."* (Qur'an 22:40)

In the earliest days of Islam, the Muslims constituted a small minority in Makkah. The idol-worshipping majority, the Quraysh, went to such extreme lengths to persecute this minority on the basis of their beliefs that the Muslims fled their homes in Makkah to go to Abyssinia or Madinah. Once the Muslims had settled in Madinah and established a stronghold, the above verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Muslims allowing them to defend, for the first time, not only their own right to worship, but the right of all worship of One God, be it Jewish or Christian, and the protection of all their places of worship.[21] In the exegesis of the above verse, Sayyid Qutb writes:

> ...Islam does not consider fighting an end or an objective in itself. It permits fighting for a goal that is greater than achieving a state of *modus vivendi*. As stated in

21. Qutb, 2006, vol. xii, pp. 134-135.

> many other Qur'anic verses, peace is the goal that Islam wants to achieve. But peace must be free of aggression, injustice and oppression. When oppression or injustice is perpetrated against any aspect of human dignity, such as the freedom of belief and worship, justice, fair distribution of benefits, responsibilities, rights and duties, and conscientious observance of divine rules by individuals and the community alike, then Islam adopts a different attitude...Islam will not countenance any peace that sanctions such aggression. Peace according to Islam, does not mean the absence of war; it means complete justice, according to the code that God has chosen for human life.[22]

The Qur'an uses the imperative *qatil* to indicate fighting and *harb* meaning 'war'. However, the term itself:

> ...introduces ambiguity as to whether or not 'fight' means the use of violence. The linguistic ambiguity of the term 'fight' further emphasizes the potential for political and contextual interpretation of the Qur'anic position on the morality of war. Not only will each society unconsciously interpret 'fighting' in a slightly different way, but the term is flexible enough to allow a certain amount of intentional interpretation to fit the needs of a given situation. Words are always defined in a cultural context, and their meaning can change relatively easily. Reading the Qur'an through a contemporary lens can lead to a reading of the word 'fight' according to contemporary notions of war.[23]

Thus, as the idea of war has expanded beyond the original idea of face-to-face armed battle on a field, fighting can be interpreted in modern times to mean not necessarily armed conflict but the use of other technology to defend oneself and one's ideals. Although

22. Ibid, p. 139.
23. Pettygrove, 2007, p. 7.

from an Islamic perspective the message of the Qur'an is timeless and unconstrained by the age and context in which it was revealed, from a historical perspective, as is the case with other texts, the language of the Qur'an is best understood when set within its social and political context. Indeed, the Old and New Testaments, among others, also speak of war and fighting.[24] It is prudent to bear in mind that the world in which these early communities emerged was a rough and unrefined one, and fighting was often their only means of survival. As far as the first Muslim community is concerned, the Arabian society in which they were born was very war-like, and people fought readily over the most minor 'deviations' from the tribal norms. Additionally, seventh century Arabia itself was surrounded by the two warring superpowers of the time, the Byzantines and the Persians. As a result, fighting was the only way of getting through such challenging pressures.[25]

Modern pacifists and anti-war movements deny that there is ever any justification for fighting or war, believing it to be destructive and immoral. While this is a very noble stance and one that can be adopted in an ideal world, it is a somewhat short-sighted view in reality. If equality, justice and harmony are threatened by an evil group of people, then it is the collective responsibility of society to stop those evil people in their tracks. This may mean a temporary phase of war, but the result is a restoration of the natural order of peace. Failure to do so would result in oppression and social chaos, which are worse in the long term, as stated in the Qur'an:

> *"...For tumult and oppression are worse than killing..."*
> (Qur'an 2:191)

Some writers take Qur'anic commands out of context and use them to argue that Islam is a blood-thirsty religion motivated by plunder and spoils of war and that violence is a part of the fabric of Islam, however this is not the case.[26] The following verses are often quoted for this purpose:

24. See Hayward's *Warfare in the Qur'an*, 2012*a*.
25. Esposito, 2002, p. 119.
26. See discussion in Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 221.

> *"Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter. But fight them not at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there. But if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving and Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in God. But if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression."* (Qur'an 2:190-193)

The commentaries and explanations of these verses highlight the following points:

- Muslims cannot initiate hostilities, but are only commanded to fight if they are being fought against;
- Should defensive warfare become unavoidable, Muslims are commanded to always to act within a strict code of ethical behaviour (this code will be discussed in detail in the next chapter);
- No force is to be carried out beyond that which is necessary to ensure that freedom of belief and justice prevail;
- Once the enemy ceases to oppress, then all hostilities should cease.[27]

Professor Joel Hayward states that there are parallels to be drawn between the Qur'anic principles on war and the principles of the Just War doctrine, which will be examined in further detail in the following chapter.[28] Meanwhile, it is worth noting here that the command for self-defence is not exclusive to Islam and also appears in the Old Testament (Torah) when God says to the Israelites:

27. See commentaries of these verses of the Qur'an in, e.g. *Ma'ariful Qur'an*, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 482-487 and *Dawatul Quran*, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 89-91.
28. See Hayward's *Warfare in the Qur'an*, 2012*a*. See also Mirbagheri's *War and Peace in Islam*, 2012.

> *"You shall put your enemies to flight and they shall fall in battle before you. Five of you shall pursue a hundred and a hundred of you ten thousand; so shall your enemies fall in battle before you."* (Leviticus 26:7-8)

Having established that peace is the norm in Islam and that fighting is permissible under certain circumstances and within clearly defined limits, the question naturally arises of how the concept of *jihad* fits into this framework.

The Question of Jihad

The word *jihad* comes from the Arabic word *jahd* meaning 'struggle' or 'striving' in the most comprehensive sense of the words. Somehow, the term *jihad* has been translated as 'holy war' and become synonymous with fighting, violence and terrorism. In fact, the entire religion of Islam seems to be judged on the basis of misconceptions about *jihad* itself. It is reported that once the Prophet ﷺ was returning from an expedition back to his hometown of Madinah, when he said to his Companions, "You have returned in the best way, and you have returned from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*." They said, "What is the greater *jihad*?" He said, "The slave [of Allah]'s struggle with his whims and passions."[29]

From this hadith, we can infer that there are two aspects of *jihad*: the greater *jihad*, which is fighting to overcome internal desires and evil inclinations, and the lesser *jihad*, which is encouraging others to achieve the same objectives.[30] *Jihad* can range from disciplining the self to perform prayers on time, educating one's family, contributing to society, improving the health system, eradicating poverty and so on. It also encompasses fighting to defend one's family, home and faith in self-defence as we have mentioned. But the fight does not necessary have to be a physical one – it can be through speech or writing. In fact the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also said, "The best *jihad* is a word of justice in the presence of an unjust ruler."[31] The intention

29. *Kashf al-Khafa*, Imam al-Ajaluni. As qtd. in Doi & Clarke, 2008, p. 686.
30. Gülen, 2004, pp. 171-176.
31. Hadith in *Sunan Ibn Majah*.

behind these actions should always be to earn the pleasure of Allah, not to be seen to do so among men. Thus *jihad* is a term that cannot be conveniently defined or translated in a word or phrase.

Troubled by the present-day distortions of the term *jihad*, Tariq Ramadan questions:

> How is it ...that one of the most fundamental notions of Islam has itself come to express the most somber traits? How can a concept, which is loaded with the most intense spirituality, become the most negative symbol of religious expression? The reading of events of recent history certainly has its share of the blame, but the distortion goes far back to the advanced date of the Middle Ages. The understanding of certain Islamic notions was from very early on confined to an exercise of pure comparison. There were crusades and there were also Muslim expansions; there were holy crusades and, thus, there were also 'holy wars', and the famous *jihad*.[32]

Ramadan states that Muslims "must go back to the source of this notion and try to better understand its spiritual and dynamic scope" because *jihad* is "the most fulfilled expression of a faith which seeks to express balance and harmony."[33]

As we have seen earlier, balance, peace and harmony must begin from within and radiate outwards in order to effect change in society. However, it is entirely human to experience inward conflict and struggles against inward negative desires and whims that, if acted upon, would at best be meaningless and, at worst, be destructive to both self and society. It is the effort required to subdue the whims of the self that can also be considered one aspect of *jihad*.[34] Ramadan adds that this is not about reducing "*jihad* to a personal dimension...but rather returning to its immediate reality. *Jihad* is to man's humanity what instinct is to an animal's behaviour."[35] Nasr elaborates on such an idea when he says:

32. Ramadan, 2001, p. 59.
33. Ibid, p. 60.
34. Ibid, p. 61.
35. Ibid.

> [I]t is necessary to remember that Islam bases itself upon the idea of establishing equilibrium within the being of man as well as in the human society where he functions and fulfills the goals of his earthly life. This equilibrium, which is the terrestrial reflection of Divine Justice and the necessary condition for peace in the human domain, is the basis upon which the soul takes its flight toward that peace.[36]

As to how a Westerner can relate to the term *jihad*, Nasr makes the excellent point that the term used to mean:

> any effort considered worthy, much like 'crusade' in its general sense in English and not in particular reference to the religious wars carried out by Western Christianity against both Muslims and Jews in Palestine in the Middle Ages. In the same way that in English one says that such and such organization is carrying out a crusade to eradicate poverty or disease, in Islamic languages one can say that this or that group or government agency is carrying out a *jihad* to, let us say, build houses for the poor.[37]

Essentially, the term is so flexible that one can use it for any practical purpose, not just in particular reference to war or conflict, even though such a term, just like the term crusade has been used in the West because of the medieval Crusades, has been used by some Muslims to call their battles *jihad*.[38] Unfortunately, certain radical groups over the last two decades have taken the word *jihad* and twisted it until it no longer resembles the original concept, and used it justify war and bloodshed and the media has perpetuated this fallacy. The present-day concept of *jihad* as a 'holy war' has its roots in Afghanistan with the Soviet occupation era, as Mirbagheri notes:

36. Nasr in Chittick, 2007, p. 43.
37. Nasr, 2004*b*, p. 257.
38. Ibid.

> It was there and then when American policy makers tried to combat the Soviet invasion by fanning the flames of Muslim zealots and offering three billion dollars in aid. The issue of *jihad* [viewed as holy war only] in Islam had long been forgotten until it was given a new lease of life in Afghanistan.[39]

The Economist also points out that "the [present view of the] notion of *jihad*, or holy war [as described by some radical groups], had almost ceased to exist in the Muslim world ...until it was revived, with American encouragement, to fire a pan-Islamic movement after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979."[40] Thus the concept of *jihad* pertains as much to non-violent and peaceful 'exertion' as much as to self-defence.

The Question of Nonviolence in Islam

Before embarking on the question of nonviolence in Islam, it is worth spending a moment defining the concept of nonviolence itself. It is a misunderstood concept and a more complex one than simply the absence of violence. In order to better understand nonviolence, it is necessary to examine the motivation and cause behind the lack of apparent violence. Unlike the common misperception that nonviolence is about victims surrendering, accepting their fate and awaiting persecution in a passive manner, according to Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Nonviolence is about active rejection of violence and full engagement in resisting oppression through plausible means that challenge domination and any other form of injustice, without inflicting injuries on the opponent."[41] Someone who lacks the means and resources to rebel against the status quo and is left with no choice but to submit to the oppression of the authority cannot be said to be a nonviolent activist. Nonviolence is also a more holistic concept than refraining from acts of physical violence. A party may

39. Mirbagheri, 2012, p. 22.
40. See "A bitter harvest," 2001 in *The Economist*. See also Mirbagheri, 2012, pp. 22-24.
41. Abu-Nimer, 2000.

never engage in acts of violence but can certainly cause as much damage to the other side through their engagement in lying, false propaganda, conspiracies and fabrication or twisting of facts. In this case, the intention still remains to cause injury, albeit not physical, to the opposing party. A nonviolent activist would thus be a person that has the means and resources to resort to violence or cause injury to the other party in another way, but actively chooses not to do so because of a deep inner conviction.

Is there such a concept as nonviolence in Islam? The example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ bears witness that there most certainly is. In the first years of Islam, the Prophet ﷺ and his followers were subject to the most extreme persecution and oppression by the Quraysh in Makkah simply for being Muslim. Men, women and children were tortured, beaten, burned, whipped and left to die in the scorching desert sun. The Prophet ﷺ himself endured having stones and thornbushes thrown at him as he walked and the entrails of animals thrown over him as he prayed. Finally matters reached a head in the seventh year of his prophethood. Quraysh boycotted the Muslims completely, socially and economically. They had to take refuge in a gulley in the mountains where they lived for three years in a state of starvation and severe deprivation, tying stones around their waists to ease the hunger pains. Almost crushed under the severity of the oppression, the Prophet ﷺ and his followers showed nothing but patience and fortitude for thirteen years because Allah had not allowed them to fight back, even though they had some means to do so, because:

> Aggression breeds aggression, and had the Muslims fought back while they were in Makka, life in the Holy City would have turned into a nightmare of violence and the Muslims to whom the Messenger was trying to teach forgiveness, tolerance and mercy would have had to resort to force to resist Quraysh who far outnumbered them. In such a war both sides would have been the losers.[42]

42. Al-Ismail, 2006, p. 184.

Thus:

> Of the 23-year period of prophethood, the initial 13 years were spent by the Prophet in Mecca. The Prophet fully adopted the way of pacifism or nonviolence during this time. There were many such issues in Mecca at the time which could have been the subject of clash and confrontation. But, by avoiding all such issues, the Prophet of Islam strictly limited his sphere to peaceful propagation of the word of God.[43]

After thirteen years in Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madinah and it was a further two years after that, that the Allah gave the Muslims permission to fight, though in self-defence only (Qur'an 22:39). Thus it is clear from the Prophetic period of Islamic history that there are some circumstances in which nonviolence is the more prudent path to take to prevent unnecessary bloodshed and others in which the greater good lies in self-defence to prevent oppression.

43. Khan, 1999, p. 246.

Chapter 4

Ethics of War and Peace

Without a doubt, the ethics of peace and war is one of the central issues in international relations today, and a challenge to every human being for that matter.[1] To fully understand this concept, it is necessary to look outside of the acceptable conventions of ethics in order to give the reader a more universal picture of this complex phenomenon. This chapter is loosely divided into two parts, the first dealing with the commonly known Western code of ethics, and the second part introduces the virtually unknown field of Islamic ethics.

To understand the ethics of peace and war, one first needs to understand the ambiguous nature of ethics itself. Many people, for example, "tend to equate ethics with their feelings. But being ethical is clearly not a matter of following one's feelings. A person following his or her feelings may recoil from doing what is right."[2] Others tend to confuse ethics with morals, and the distinction here is: a moral is something that is "commonly felt and done," as opposed to ethics which is something "appropriate and rational".[3] In other

1. See Dower, 2009, p. 2.
2. Andre & Velasquez, 1987.
3. Siddiqui, 1997, p. 423.

words, morality is what feels to be right or wrong, and ethics is what is deemed acceptable through rational thought.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *ethic* or *ethics* is the "discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation," it is a "set of moral principles: a theory or system of moral values".[4] The immediate reaction to this definition may be: "Good and bad according to whose standards?" This is a question that is not raised often enough in academia, especially in the West where Western values and its code of ethics is forced on other people who may not share the same values, as is the case today with some U.S. policies in the Middle East, for instance. As the research of Pitta, Fung and Isberg shows, what is ethical in one culture may not be the case in other cultures.[5]

Additionally, many associate ethics with religion. Even though most world religions place great emphasis on ethics, ethics itself cannot be confined to religion and its adherents alone. On this note, Andre and Velasquez write, "Ethics applies as much to the behavior of the atheist as to that of the saint. [However,] Religion can set high ethical standards and can provide intense motivations for ethical behavior."[6]

Moreover, being ethical is not the same as following the law, contrary to the belief of some. Laws often incorporate ethical standards but can also deviate from what is ethical. For example, the laws of the United States until as recently as 1865, ruled in favour of the practice of slavery even though to the standards of many that was and is an unethical act. Along the same lines, being ethical is also not the same as following society's norms even if most of society follows them and believes a certain behaviour to be ethically acceptable. Nazi Germany is a good example of this, where almost the entire society became ethically and morally corrupt by blindly following 'the norm'.[7] Thus a comprehensive definition of ethics can be:

> [W]ell based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms

4. Merriam-Webster [Online], 2012.
5. Pitta, Fung & Isberg, 1999, pp. 240-256.
6. Andre & Velasquez, 1987.
7. Andre & Velasquez, 1987.

> of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics...refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud [among other things]. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And, ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well founded reasons.[8]

The article from which this definition is taken, goes on to say that ethics in actuality refers to the study and the development of one's ethical standards of life. Therefore, it is necessary to "continuously examine one's standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded," as is the effort of "striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based."[9] In other words, ethics is not a static concept but one that is continuously developing depending on the time and place where its code is applied.

A Glimpse at the Western Perspectives on the Ethics of War and Peace

Although the question of ethics of war and peace is an intricate one, there have been attempts by various writers throughout the ages to explain this topic, Aristotle being the earliest known writer on this subject. The branch of military ethics is intended to guide members of different armed groups to act according to the specific requirements of combat. As part of military ethics, Just War Theory is often seen as the general rule in modern warfare. However, individual countries have their own specific ways of upholding the principles of this theory.

Although there are various traditions of thought concerning this topic, there are three traditions that dominate the ethics of war and

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

peace today: Realism, Pacifism, and Just War Theory (JWT).[10] Even though these three, known as 'the big three', are more or less all Western traditions, there are radical differences between them.[11]

The Big Three

Essentially, the core proposition of JWT is that sometimes states and/or nations can claim moral justifications for using armed force against another state or another group of people.[12] According to those who hold on to these values, war sometimes is morally right, and when that is the case it is appropriate to use violence. According to this logic, the participation of the Allies in World War II, for example, was a definitive example of states participating in a just and good war, as it is often referred to by the 'victors' of that war as 'the moral war'.

Traditional Western scholars have divided the theory into three meaningful parts:

1) *jus ad bellum*, which concerns the justice of resorting to war in the first place;
2) *jus in bello*, which concerns the justice of conduct within war, after it has begun; and
3) *jus post bellum*, which concerns the justice of peace agreements and the termination phase of war.[13]

The following points outline the Just War Theory requirements:

- The war is used as the last resort after all other peaceful alternatives have been convincingly exhausted.
- The war must be waged by a legitimate authority (this usually means the state).
- The war must be in response to a wrong committed, for example, aggression and it is carried out only to redress the injury with the right intention throughout.
- There must be a reasonable chance of success for the war to start.

10. See Orend, 2008.
11. Ibid.
12. See Mirbagheri, 2012, p. 129.
13. Orend, 2008.

- Peace, as the ultimate objective of the war, must be superior to the peace that prevailed before the war.
- There must be proportionality in the conduct of war. All unnecessary deaths, injuries and suffering, outside the remit of the objective of war must be avoided.
- The war should discriminate combatants and non-combatants, particularly civilians.[14]

On the other hand, Realism, deeply rooted in Darwinism, expresses a "profound scepticism about the application of moral concepts, such as justice, to the key problems of foreign policy."[15] According to realists, power and national security motivate states during wartime to compete for dominance, victory and destruction of the rival state or states, and therefore moral appeals are strictly wishful thinking and they should not get in the way. They claim that in a world of competition, where only the strong and the fittest are meant to survive, talk of moral warfare is nonsense because ethics has nothing to do with "the rough-and-tumble world of global politics," and a country should tend to its own interests and not to moral ideals. In the words of a philosophy professor:

> Morality is a luxury states can't afford, for they inhabit a violent international arena, and they've got to be able to get in that game and win, if they are to serve and protect their citizens in an effective way over time. Morality is simply not on the radar screen for states, given their defensive function and the brutal environment in which they subsist.[16]

Unlike the case with Just War theorists and realists, for pacifists moral concepts "can indeed be applied fruitfully to international affairs."[17] According to pacifists, it makes no sense "to ask whether a war is just" and they argue that war should not be undertaken at all.

14. Excerpt from Mirbagheri's *War and Peace in Islam*, 2012, p. 129.
15. Orend, 2008.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid. For more on the topic see *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2008.

Where JWT "is *sometimes* permissive with regard to war, Pacifism is *always* prohibitive."[18] For pacifists, war is always wrong no matter what and there is always a better resolution than fighting. According to Gittings, however, Pacifism "may be regarded as a sort of 'practical pacifism' which opposes war not so much out of morality as on the grounds that it is too destructive ever to be justified rationally."[19] The common critique against Pacifism is that it fails to use any kind of force to prevent further acts of violence, such as war and genocide.

Ethics in Islam

The Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy defines 'morality' in the descriptive sense as "certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion), or accepted by an individual for her own behavior." Thus the question arises, is it not sufficient for each society to formulate its own code of conduct based on rational thought and suited to the circumstances of that specific time and place? The answer is no.

Human beings are inherently selfish creatures and governed largely by self-interest and desire. Human reason is not above being swayed by these emotions and thus it does not provide a stable foundation on which to base a code of behaviour. Religion, on the other hand, acknowledges that there is a Higher Power that not only understands the capricious nature of the human mind, but rises above it. It is only when that code of conduct for human beings comes from their Creator that it provides an unfailing basis for all of humanity to follow regardless of time and place. Religion not only sets out the code but also details the rewards that can be achieved by following it in order to motivate people. Conversely, the punishments for failing to adhere to the code are also outlined as a deterrent.

In the context of Islam, this timeless code has been revealed by God in His books (including the Torah, the Gospels and the Qur'an) and passed to humanity through His prophets and messengers, who taught and exemplified that message. Muslims believe that this code of conduct is contained in the Qur'an as this is the only surviving

18. Ibid.
19. Gittings, 2012, p. 4.

and unadulterated of God's revealed books, and in the hadith, this being the record of the actions and words of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. For those matters that are not clear within these primary sources, the consensus of learned men (*ijma*) and their analogical deductions (*qiyas*) also form a part of that code, which was touched upon in the section about the Shariah.

These primary sources and associated works, such as Qur'anic exegesis, contain Islamic ethics (ethics being the study of morality[20]), but there is no distinct discipline in Islam which can be called 'Islamic ethics'.[21] This is because ethics is embodied in the very essence and practice of Islam itself and is not an entity separate from the religion. According to Islamic theology, each and every human being, born and unborn, established a covenant with the Creator at the beginning of Creation as explained in the Qur'an:

> *"When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): 'Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes you and sustains you)?' They said: 'Yea! We do testify!' (This), lest you should say on the Day of Judgement: 'Of this we were never mindful.'"* (Qur'an 7:172)

On His part, Allah created human beings with amazing powers and faculties to reason and contemplate, and He conveyed to humanity the code of conduct by which they should abide. On our part, we are obliged to use those faculties for our own benefit and the good of the rest of humanity and this is achieved by following the divine code, as the Qur'an says:

> *"Allah commands justice and doing good and giving to relatives. And He forbids indecency and doing wrong and tyranny. He warns you so that hopefully you will pay heed. Be true to Allah's contract when you have*

20. Department of History and Philosophy: College of Arts and Humanities. Lander University. Morals, Ethics, and Metaethics. Available from: http://philosophy.lander.edu/ethics/types.html.
21. Siddiqui, 1997, p. 423.

> *agreed to it, and do not break your oaths once they confirmed and you have made Allah your guarantee."* (Qur'an 16:90-91)

Therefore, whoever follows the code of conduct outlined in the Qur'an has upheld his[22] part of the contract, while whoever does not, has broken his covenant with the Creator. "This primordial scene becomes the charter for ethics, as an acknowledgement of the divine authority and for spirituality, a testimony to the intimate relationship between God and humanity."[23] Such acknowledgement of divine authority extends to every sphere of a Muslim's existence; his ritual acts of worship, the permissibility of what he can eat and drink through to his relationship with every section of society and even the environment.

In fact, the driving force in ensuring and applying ethics is based on the Qur'anic notion that every human being is called by their Creator to "command good and forbid evil" in every aspect of life (Qur'an 3:104; 3:110). Such moral and ethical injunctions appear with such frequency in the Qur'an, that it would be no exaggeration to say it that it is also a book of morals and ethics. Indeed, another name for the Qur'an is *Al-Furqan* – the criterion that distinguishes right from wrong.[24] Thus, in Islam, the question of ethics is inextricably linked with the concept of the divine, and thus submitting oneself to Allah also means acting ethically.

Having established that Islam and ethics are interrelated, it is worth looking in more detail at the elements which make up the life-transaction that is given the umbrella term of Islam, namely *Islam*, *Iman*, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*.

The practice of *Islam* is to surrender the self to the will of Allah and to carry out His commands through physical acts of worship.[25] It

22. The male pronoun is used in the generic sense of referring to people, male and female.
23. Ernst, 2003, pp. 110-111.
24. The Qur'an refers to itself as *Al-Furqan* in Qur'an 25:1.
25. It is worth remembering here that worship in Islam is not limited to acts such as prayer or fasting, but in Islam, worship encompasses all good deeds carried out with a sincere intention such as smiling at a fellow human being, earning an honest living and providing for one's family, visiting the sick and so on.

is only in doing so that one can achieve peace. *Iman* refers to the idea of belief or faith in Allah. One who does not profess this belief in the Divine and its laws is neither at peace with himself nor with society because belief itself is an act of the heart. Therefore, if there is no peace of the heart, a person cannot enjoy internal or external peace. Without *Iman* the physical acts of worship are meaningless. As a result the "inner conviction of *Iman* and the practice of Islam are intertwined in that faith and righteous conduct go hand in hand."[26]

As for *taqwa*, it is a concept that is not easily translatable. It means being in a constant state of God-consciousness, but also refers to 'preserving' or 'protecting' oneself from sin that would incur the displeasure of Allah; avoiding moral grey areas that could lead one astray. It is through the avoidance of that which Allah has prohibited and all that leads to it that peace, balance and the natural order of creation is preserved. Once this state has been achieved then acting with *Ihsan* becomes second nature and that is the pinnacle of Islamic ethics. *Ihsan* is to do what Allah has asked of you in the best way that you can with a pure and sincere heart as if you were in His presence. Indeed, *Ihsan* is defined as "to worship Allah as if you see Him for if you do not see Him, He sees you."[27] Or to use a more practical analogy:

> ...*ihsan* is absolutely indispensable to the outward practices [*Islam*] and inner beliefs [*Iman*]. You may have a car which is mechanically in perfect working order and whose fuel tank and reservoirs are full of all the right fluids to ensure it will run smoothly but unless you turn the key in the ignition and create the spark which sets the whole thing in motion you are not going anywhere. *Ihsan* is that vital inner dynamic needed to bring to life the whole pattern of practices and beliefs which make up the body of Islam for every Muslim.[28]

26. Siddiqui, 1997, pp. 423-425.
27. Definition contained in the Hadith Jibril in *Sahih Muslim*. For an in-depth discussion of the Hadith Jibril, see Bewley's *The Natural Form of Man*, 2016.
28. Bewley, 2016, p. 195.

All these elements put together define the way of life that we call Islam and essentially mean that a Muslim has to guard his external and internal

> behavior and his manifest deeds, his words and his thoughts, his feelings and intentions...his role is to champion what is right and fight what is wrong, seek what is true and abandon what is false, cherish what is beautiful and wholesome and avoid what is indecent. Truth and virtue are his goals... In his view, arrogance and vanity, harshness and indifference, are distasteful, offensive, and displeasing to God.[29]

Islam vs. Realism and Pacifism

Realism, from whatever angle one looks at it, is incompatible with Islam in almost all of its points on the discussion of war and peace. One of the classical realists, E H. Carr, wrote that "states are not ordinarily expected to observe the same standards of morality as individuals,"[30] in part because "there is no authority above the state capable of imposing moral behaviour on it."[31] Of course, this blatant disregard for a higher power and, by extension, His commands is against the very concepts of Iman and Islam.

Under the Realist theory, a state should pursue its own self interest at all costs and strive to attain as many resources as possible, even if this means loss of life and destruction of the enemy. Islam does not allow war under any circumstances but in the face of oppression, in order for self defence and survival, and certainly not for the purpose of self-interest. Islam also forbids destruction and disregard for innocent lives. A just society teaches good moral and ethical conduct to the point where it is even concerned with the treatment of the enemy, something that is often ignored in many societies and philosophies, as was seen from the example of the Realists regarding the ethics of war.

As for Pacifism, it is not foreign or incompatible with Islam, one reason being that Islamic ethics of war and peace initially began

29. 'Abd al 'Ati, 1998, p. 41.
30. Carr, 1981, p. 157.
31. Ibid, p. 161.

of a pacifist nature.[32] That is because the early Muslims, although oppressed by their enemies in Makkah, were completely forbidden to fight for the first thirteen years of Islam. It was two years after the migration to Madinah when the Qur'anic verse was revealed which gave the Muslims permission to fight in self-defence only (Qur'an 22:39-40). However, even after this divine command was given to them, Muslims were always reminded that war was the last resort and that they should always choose peace over war. In this regard, Islam closely relates to the theory of Pacifism. However, most scholars have concluded that it is permissible to fight according to the teachings of Islam in cases when corruption, oppression, violence and killing prevails in a society, *if* every other means have been tested and have failed.[33] This is because if the vicious cycle of oppression and killing is allowed to continue then the victims will be annihilated, therefore it becomes the moral duty of those who have the means to stand against injustice and oppression to do so even if it means doing so through fighting. It is in this regard that Islam differs from the theory of Pacifism.

Islam and the Just War Theory (JWT)

This theory, as mentioned earlier, "[p]rovides a sophisticated account of the circumstances in which it is morally right to go to war," and also outlines behaviour that is considered moral or immoral during war, for example, a soldier "may not directly attack non-combatants".[34] Unlike Realism, JWT has much more in common with the Islamic tradition, but there are also notable distinctions between the two.

As far as *jus ad bellum* is concerned, in which a just cause needs to be found in order to go to war, sometimes nations take the opportunity of such a broad definition of 'just' in the theory and easily find reasons aligned with their own interests to go to war against another state. In Islam, such an act is prohibited, because a state must not go to war to exercise its military might and power in a country with the excuse of defending and liberating an oppressed

32. Brown, 2006, pp. 5-16.
33. See USIP Special Report, 2002, p. 3.
34. Dower, 2009, p. 2. See also Mirbagheri, 2012, p. 129.

people. It is a command in Islam that every act to be performed should be accompanied by a sincere intention. Therefore, the intention of any intervening council should be noble, and that should remain the focus of the campaign throughout the mission; material or selfish considerations have no place in such a campaign, according to the Shariah. Doi and Clarke note here that:

> An ordinary war may be for territory or trade-routes, or to capture prisoners of war, for revenge or military glory or for 'temporal goods of this world'. Such a war is condemned in the Shari'ah. But *jihad* is fought under strict conditions, under a leader, purely for the sake of Allah and to raise His word uppermost. All baser motives, therefore, are strictly excluded.[35]

Comparative justice is a motive that may trigger conflict. According to Islam, "Justice does require retribution and Islam does call for 'an eye for an eye'. But it does not mean an innocent eye for an innocent eye; it means the eye of the perpetrator for the eye of the victim," and only if the victim does not forgive the oppressor.[36]

Regarding *jus in bello*, Islam lays down a strict and detailed code of conduct on the battlefield, and this can be observed throughout early Islamic history. The first Caliph, Abu Bakr ﷺ, for instance, gave the following advice to his general, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, while the latter prepared for an expedition on the coasts of Syria:

> When you travel, do not drive your companions so much that they get tired on the journey. Do not be angry at your people, but consult them in affairs. Do justice and keep away from tyranny and oppression, because a community that engages in tyranny, does not prosper, nor do they win victory over their enemies. When you become victorious over your enemies, do not kill their children, old people and women. Do not even approach their date palms, nor burn their harvest, nor cut the fruit-bearing trees. Do not break a promise once you have

35. Doi & Clarke, 2008, pp. 681-682.
36. Baig, 2001 in *Albalagh*.

> made it, and do not break the terms of treaty, once you have entered into it. You will meet on your way people in the monasteries, who have become monks for the sake of Allah; leave them alone with that to which they have dedicated themselves and with which they are content for themselves, and do not destroy their monasteries, and do not kill them. May the peace of Allah be with you.[37]

Thus we can see that there are specific commands not to kill monks and non-combatants and not to engage in destruction of crops and property. A common war tactic used by armies of great powers was to lay waste to land through wanton destruction and burning and indiscriminate slaughtering of citizens, such as the Romans did in Carthage in 146 BC. The Muslim army was advised by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to behave with justice and decency and was:

> prohibited from taking anything from the general public of a conquered country without paying for it. If in a war the Muslim army occupies an area of the enemy country, and is encamped there, it does not have the right to use the things belonging to the people without their consent. If they need anything, they should purchase it from the local population or should obtain permission from the owners.[38]

Whenever the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ deputed any of his Companions on a mission, he would say: "Give tidings (to the people); do not create (in their minds) aversion (towards religion); show them leniency and do not be hard upon them."[39] With respect to prisoners of war, the Shariah stipulates that they must not be tortured or punished. They are to be treated kindly while in captivity and every necessary provision should be made for their food and clothing.[40] In fact, Allah describes the "truly good" as those who:

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37. *Al-Ajuz, Manahij ash-Shariah al-Islamiyyah*, Vol. 1, p. 345. As qtd. in Doi & Clarke, 2008.
38. Maududi, 1976, p. 24.
39. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
40. Doi & Clarke, 2008, pp. 680-681.

> *"...give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives: 'We feed you only out of desire for the Face of Allah. We do not want any repayment from you or any thanks.'"* (Qur'an 76:8)

Giving prisoners food was a new charitable practice introduced by Islam in a time and place when it was customary for captives to be forced to work for their food or beg for it.[41]

Regarding *jus post bellum*, Muslims are commanded to agree to peace as soon as the enemy does so:

> *"If they incline to peace, you too incline to it, and put your trust in Allah. He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing."* (Qur'an 8:61)

However,

> *"if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression."* (Qur'an 2:193)

Thus Islam has a very strict code of ethics that are to be practised in the run-up to, during and in the closing stages of war. Nevertheless, to be fair to history, there are wars that have been fought in the name of Islam, as have other wars in the name of other religions, such as the Crusades, but most of these wars were and are fought for political reasons between rulers battling for supremacy. As far as Muslims are concerned, many of their rulers have used concepts like *jihad*, for example, to fight their wars when in actuality those were political moves by rulers who used religion to rally people behind them in order to achieve their own goals.

Nevertheless, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the embodiment of Islamic ideals in every sphere of his life including on the battlefield and no discussion of the subject of conflict resolution would be complete without a look at how the Prophet ﷺ himself dealt with all manner of conflict throughout his life, thus putting into practice the high ideals set by Islam.

41. Maududi, 1967, p. 159.

Part Three

The Example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Chapter 5

The Practice of the Prophet ﷺ

The Importance of the Prophetic Example

According to the Islamic viewpoint, every prophet of Allah sent to humanity was, among other things, an ambassador of justice, equality and peace. As the Qur'an says:

> *"... Allah sent prophets with glad tidings and warnings, and with them He sent down the Scripture in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed."* (Qur'an 2:213)

Thus, every prophet should be looked up to as a peacemaker, and that is where people are to take their matters of difference to.[1] By looking into the lives of these prophets and living by their teachings and example, people can seek meaningful guidance and solutions to their problems.[2] Although Muslims are encouraged to look into and learn from the teachings of all the prophets, it is the Prophet

1. This is, if the message of those prophets of God still exists in its original form.
2. For more on the lives of the prophets, from an Islamic perspective, see *Stories of the Prophets* by Ibn Katheer.

Muhammad ﷺ to whom they look up to first, for two main reasons. Firstly, he was the final messenger who was given the final message, the Qur'an, which encompasses and completes the messages of all the preceding prophets. Secondly, his words and actions have been recorded in minute detail in the hadith, so we have access to his example, the Sunnah, more than for any other prophet. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was, during his life, and remains someone with whom people can easily relate to, identify with and emulate because he was an ordinary human being who was transparent about his lifestyle and conduct. In its degree of importance, the Sunnah is second only to Allah's word, since the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is regarded as the embodiment of the Qur'an.

For Muslims, the Prophet ﷺ was everything that a Muslim wishes to be in this life, and "to accept Muhammad as the Prophet of God," which is part of the testimony of faith, "is to accept that the revelation he received is from God."[3] Therefore, anyone who accepts Islam is bound to follow both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an reminds Muslims:

> *"O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination."* (Qur'an 4:59)

And a few verses later:

> *"But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission."* (Qur'an 4:65)

Now that the Prophet ﷺ is no longer present to be a "judge in all disputes", Muslims can continue to seek his advice and judgement

3. Sardar, 2007, p. 2.

through the Sunnah. Thus studying the concept of conflict resolution in Islam without studying the personality, character, story and way of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would be meaningless.

The Prophet ﷺ himself believed in education by example. His teachings, which established a tradition based on human love and respect, taught people to be honest and responsible citizens. This was one of the main reasons why people from all walks of life accepted Islam in great numbers during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. They were impressed by his manners, especially in dealing with other people, friend or enemy, as we shall see during the course of this chapter. "The battlefield was for him the last resort for defending a righteous cause. But when forced into fighting for human rights, he did not flinch."[4]

When reading about the Prophet's involvement in military actions, some Christian critics of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, among others, quickly point out that Isa [Jesus] عليه السلام would have never done or taught such things. Firstly, they completely ignore "the heavily martial spirit and explicit violence of some sections of the Old Testament; a revelation passionately embraced in its entirely by Jesus." Moreover, they "also brush off some of Jesus' seemingly incongruous statements as being allegorical and metaphorical."[5] And secondly, the point that is completely missed here by these critics is the context of the lives of these two men. As Professor Joel Hayward notes, they place little importance on the obvious differences of experiences and responsibilities between Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus was the spiritual leader of a small and intimate group of followers at a time of occupation but relative peace and personal security throughout the land. He suffered death, according to the Christian scriptures, but his execution by the Rome-governed state came after a short burst of state anger that actually followed several years of him being able to preach throughout the land without severe opposition and with no known violence. By contrast, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (in

4. Iqbal, 1975, pp. xvi-xvii.
5. For instance, see Luke 22:36, wherein Jesus encourages his disciples to sell their garments so that they can purchase swords, and Matthew 10:34 ("*Do not think I come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword*"). Also see Joshua 6:21; Deuteronomy 7:1-3 and 20:16-17. (For more on the topic, see Hayward, 2012*a*, p. 9).

many ways like Moses or Joshua) found himself not only the spiritual leader but also the political and legislative leader of a massive community that wanted to be moderate, just and inclusive but suffered bitter organised persecution and warfare from other political entities which were committed to his community's destruction. His responsibilities (including the sustenance, education, governance and physical protection of tens of thousands of children, men and women) were very different.[6]

Setting aside any preconceptions, it is clear that Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ successful work and influential message were clearly evident in the way he completely transformed a war-loving and backward people into a civilised one – that later ruled from Spain to China for almost a thousand years. As various writers have pointed out, the Prophet ﷺ and "his followers created a way of life that was more equitable and just than anything that Arabs" and the region as a whole had ever known.[7] "There are many lessons that can be learned from the exemplary conduct of the Prophet... who was a politically righteous person with highest moral and ethical values."[8] The remainder of the chapter looks at this extraordinary life.

Muhammad ﷺ Before Prophethood

Without a doubt, the character of Muhammad ﷺ, even before Islam, was a rare one in all of Arabia. It was as if Allah was building his excellent character and keeping him in a state of purity to later carry out the divine task of prophethood.[9] While he was growing up, the young Muhammad ﷺ never bowed before the pagan deities that filled Makkah and avoided the ways of the ignorant people of his time. He became know as '*al-amin* – the trustworthy one' among the Makkan pagans because of his scrupulously honest character.

He was a man of compassion who felt deeply troubled for his fallen society. He is recorded as having had great love and care for the poor and the orphans of his city, for the weak, the slaves and

6. Hayward, 2012*a*, p. 10.
7. Weston, 2008, p. 13.
8. Sardar, 2007, p. 2.
9. Ibn Ishaq, 2004, p. 81. See also IIPH Eds., 2004, p. 10.

the helpless widows.[10] He was also a visionary. He knew that for a society to prosper it needed to be just and take care of the needs of the people, especially the poor, otherwise hunger and discontent can lead society to greater challenges and contempt.[11] Therefore, even before his prophethood, Muhammad ﷺ took it as his duty to help the less fortunate members of society and, as a result, whoever knew him showed great respect for him, even giving him the title 'Protector of the orphans and the widows'. And when he married a business woman, with whom he worked for years, they both spent most of their wealth freely in helping the needy.

Concerned with the way Makkan society used to run its affairs, and especially regarding its commercial dealings, young Muhammad ﷺ joined the elders and the chiefs of the city to form the *Hilf al-Fudul* Alliance, known as the *League of the Virtuous*. This alliance came about after an incident that had taken place in Makkah where a Yemeni merchant had complained to the leaders of the tribe of Quraysh that a Makkan notable had not paid him the full price for the goods he had taken from the merchant.[12] As a result, at this meeting, the members pledged to collectively take measures and respect the principles of justice in order to prevent future conflict and establish fair dealings between people.[13] Muhammad's ﷺ role was crucial in this alliance, and the principles that came out of it go hand-in-hand with the principles of Islamic ethics.[14]

As for his early peaceful character and dealings with situations of conflict and conflict resolution, historical accounts describe Muhammad ﷺ as having always been trusted by the people "as a mediator between two conflicting parties in his homeland, Makkah."[15] This was not an easy thing to do in seventh-century tribal Arabia. The following is one of the many examples of how young Muhammad ﷺ handled a very challenging and delicate

10. Al Qahtani, 2007, pp. 87-90.
11. As we observe today, in many of the underserved communities in the world, especially where the government is corrupt, the needy are left with no choice but to result to revolt and destruction.
12. Lings, 1983, pp. 31-32.
13. Ibn Ishaq, 2004, pp. 57-58. See also Ramadan, 2007, pp. 20-22.
14. Ibrahim, 1982, p. 355.
15. IIPH Eds., 2004, p. 10.

situation of dispute during the time he was being prepared by the Creator Himself to become His final messenger.

When the *Kabah*[16] (the Sacred House of Islam in present-day Saudi Arabia) was damaged by flood, the various clans of Makkah set about reconstructing it. The Black Stone, as a part of the shrine, had been temporarily removed during this renovation.[17] However, when it was time to set the Black Stone back in its place, the clans could not agree on which one of them should have the honour of doing so. The leaders of the clans who had worked hard together in this reconstruction were now greatly divided, formed side-alliances, and were on the verge of fighting.[18] As the arguments continued, one of the old and wisest chiefs suggested waiting until morning and putting the decision in the hands of the first person to enter the holy sanctuary. That individual so happened to be the young Muhammad ﷺ. Realising that it was him, all sides felt a relief that the matter was now in the hands of 'the trustworthy one'.[19]

Seeing the tensions between the parties, Muhammad ﷺ accepted the challenge of mediating between them, but the slightest error would have turned the town of Makkah into a bloodbath. With no signs of unease, Muhammad ﷺ asked the leaders of the clans to bring him a cloak and put the Black Stone in its centre. Then, he asked each clan leader to hold one corner of the cloak and carry the Black Stone to the right spot, where it had always been. Then Muhammad ﷺ himself set the stone in its place, satisfying the honour of all of the clans involved in the dispute.[20] In this case, he saved the situation from getting out of control by putting the stone in its place with his

16. *Kabah* is the Arabic word for 'cube'. The Kabah is said to have been built by Prophet Ibrahim [Abraham] ﷺ and his son Isma'il [Ishmael] ﷺ, long before the Arabs filled it with idols. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Kabah is said to have contained over 360 idols that the Arabs used to worship before Islam (See Weston, 2008, p. 16). The Kabah is the building towards which Muslims pray, and is surrounded by the *Masjid al-Haram* or Sacred Mosque, the largest mosque in the world.
17. The Black Stone is an ancient relic believed to date back to the time of Adam ﷺ that is now set in the eastern corner of the Kabah. Even before the advent of Islam, it was held in great esteem.
18. Iqbal, 1975, pp. 1-2.
19. Ibn Ishaq, 2004, pp. 85-86. See also Ramadan, 2007, p. 25.
20. Ibid. See also Dairesi & Aydin, 2004, p. 162.

own hand without the slightest protest from any of the sides.[21] This truly speaks of the respect people had for Muhammad ﷺ and his ability to treat all sides equitably in a dispute.

After this event, it had become clear to the leaders of the Makkan clans that young Muhammad ﷺ had saved the day, and the Makkan tribes continued their usual daily affairs as usual. But for Muhammad ﷺ this meant nothing since this was one of the hundreds of other problems he saw that needed attention in his city. This dispute resolution for him was only a temporary treatment of his society's ills which could re-emerge at any moment erupting in violence and bloodshed, as was often the case in pre-Islamic Arabia. Therefore, worried and saddened about his peoples' condition, Muhammad ﷺ frequently used to retire in the cave of Hira, in the mountains of Makkah, away from the hustle and bustle of city life, where he meditated and reflected. It was one night in the cave of Hira, that the Angel Gabriel [Jibril] ﷺ recited to him the first verses of the Qur'an:[22]

> *"Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created – Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful – He Who taught (the use of) the Pen – Taught man that which he knew not..."* (Qur'an 96:1-5)

That night he became the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the final messenger of Allah. He was forty years of age.

The Makkan Years of Prophethood

Right after Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received his first revelations, he began to preach Islam privately, and later on publicly to the Makkans. He and his followers faced rejection and mounting persecution from the Makkans. The same people, who had previously respected him greatly and called him the trustworthy one, were now calling him degrading names and resorting to physical attacks. This new religion that Muhammad ﷺ was preaching threatened the economic

21. Iqbal, 1975, p. 3.
22. Al-Ismail, 2006, pp. 44-45.

and social privileges that the Makkan Quraysh enjoyed because it espoused concepts such as equality, humility and forgiveness. According to the Qur'an, however, such rejection was not unique to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ considering that most of the earlier prophets, like Isa [Jesus], Musa [Moses], Ibrahim [Abraham], Nuh [Noah], and others ﷺ, were also harshly rejected and persecuted. And, like the other prophets, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was very patient with the people and persistent with his mission. So patient was he that, for the sake of peace and avoidance of conflict, he endured all the hardships placed upon him and his followers by the Makkans. He understood that patience was an integral component of success.[23] In fact, patience turned out to be his key to long-term success in changing the ways of his hard-hearted, arrogant and tyrannical society.

The Prophet ﷺ and his small band of new Muslims endured verbal abuse and ridicule at first, which escalated into physical abuse; the Makkans would throw innards of dead animals over the Muslims as they prayed or throw obstacles in their way as they walked through the city. Finally, when the Makkans could contain their rage no longer, they openly beat, whipped, burned and tortured the unprotected[24] Muslims in whatever way they could imagine and left them to die slow deaths. The Makkans knew that they could not physically kill the Prophet ﷺ himself as he was under the protection of his noble tribe and especially his unconverted uncle, Abu Talib. So they devised another plan. They sent a Makkan elder to the Prophet ﷺ with offers of wealth, honour and leadership of Makkah if only he would leave his ridiculous ideas. In response, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Uncle, if they placed the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to abandon this affair, I would not until Allah made the truth prevail or I died in the attempt."[25]

23. Al Qahtani, 2007, pp. 221-222.
24. It was the custom of the Arabs that men belonging to noble tribes were under the protection of their own tribe. So if a protected man was harmed in any way by a man from another tribe, then his tribe was honour bound to retaliate. Many of the converts to Islam did not belong to notable clans and thus did not enjoy this tribal protection.
25. As qtd. in Al-Ismail, 2006, p. 90.

The Prophet's ﷺ initial revelations mainly focused on the Oneness of God, and the basic principles of the faith. Fighting, even in self-defence, had not yet been prescribed to the Prophet ﷺ and the new Muslim community. Therefore, Muslims were faced with two difficult choices: to bear the persecution of the Makkan pagans or leave their birthplace, the city of Makkah. Seeing the hardships that the unprotected Muslims were experiencing – starvation, torture and murder – the Prophet ﷺ, for the first time, advised fifteen of them, not to fight or defend themselves but to migrate secretly to Abyssinia, the land of a Christian king known as Najashi [Negus]. The Prophet ﷺ himself, however, stayed in Makkah with his cadre in order to continue with his mission of teaching the new faith to people.[26]

However, things were about to get worse for the Muslims who remained in Makkah. The Makkan Quraysh were furious that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had refused their offer of wealth and leadership and that people were converting to Islam on a daily basis, regardless of the treatment that was meted out to them. Therefore, they made a covenant against the Prophet ﷺ and his tribe (comprising Muslims and non-Muslims) and all other Muslims. There was to be a complete economic and social boycott of them. For three years, the Makkan Quraysh did not buy from or sell to them nor did they socialise or marry among them. The Prophet ﷺ, his tribe and the Muslims were forced to take refuge in a gulley in the mountains, where they lived a life of hardship and severe deprivation.[27] It is said that as a result of this hardship both the Prophet's ﷺ beloved wife and uncle, Abu Talib, passed away shortly after the boycott ended. With the death of Abu Talib, the Quraysh became more vicious in their attacks on the Prophet ﷺ, so he visited the town of Ta'if hoping to gain supporters.

The people there not only refused to accept him and his message, they threw him out of town and had the vagabonds and children throw stones at him. By the time the Prophet ﷺ escaped the crowds, it is said that his sandals were filled with blood from the injuries he received, yet when one of the angels offered to destroy the town, the

26. Lings, 1983, pp. 77-84.
27. Emerick, 2002, pp. 88-89.

Prophet ﷺ refused and instead prayed for their guidance to Islam.[28] Even in the face of severe persecution and given the opportunity of retribution, the Prophet's ﷺ response was to forgive and pray for his persecutors.

The persecution of the Prophet ﷺ and his followers continued. For thirteen years, the Prophet ﷺ struggled against verbal abuse, ridicule, persecution, physical abuse and economic and social sanctions against his people. Never did he resort to answering back, cursing or wishing ill on his persecutors. Never did he resort to physical violence or force. He simply carried on his divine task with dignity and grace, and through the means of nonviolence; a practice today usually, if not exclusively, attributed to Mahatma Gandhi.[29]

Meanwhile, the number of Muslims in the nearby city of Yathrib had grown considerably through the Prophet's ﷺ efforts and the Makkan Muslims were slowly moving to Yathrib. The Makkan Quraysh were afraid that should the Prophet ﷺ emigrate to Yathrib, then the Muslims would have a power base from which to attack them in Makkah. They could not allow this to happen and the only solution was to kill the Prophet ﷺ himself. The Quraysh devised a plot whereby they selected one man from each Makkan tribe to slay the Prophet ﷺ with their swords at the same time. In this way, the Prophet's tribe would not be able to retaliate against all the other tribes at the same time. On learning of this assassination plot, the Prophet ﷺ emigrated to Yathrib (later to be called Madinah), whose people had earlier pledged to protect and support him and the Makkan Muslims.[30]

The Madinan Years of Prophethood

Soon after the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ, the people, both native and migrant, named their city *Madinah-tun Nabi* (the City of the Prophet) or simply Madinah. At this stage, there were several distinct groups

28. Hussain, 2009, p. 34. Decades later the inhabitants of Ta'if became Muslim.
29. Also recognised for creating a nonviolent social and political movement to oppose the British colonial oppression was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988), a close friend of Gandhi, also known as Badshah Khan. See *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan* by Eknath Easwaran.
30. Lings, 1983, pp.118-124.

living in Madinah. There were the two main warring native tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Within these tribes were members who had become Muslim and those who had remained pagan. Those who had become Muslim were called the *Ansar* or Supporters. There were also a group among them who had pretended to enter into Islam for their own ulterior motives, but were in reality Hypocrites. Additionally, there were the Muslim migrants from Makkah, who were known as the *Muhajirun* or Emigrants. Finally there were also three powerful Jewish tribes.

Given this tribal and religious diversity in what was a small city, it was no mean feat to maintain peace between all the groups. Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ did so by drafting the famous document now called the Madinah Charter or the Constitution of Madinah.[31] The document which has survived to this day "was a series of formal agreements of non-aggression" among all the different groups in Madinah at the time.[32] It "delineated the reciprocal relationships between the Muslims and the Jews with a statement of the right of each party in the civil functioning of the city."[33] Here, as Yahia Emerick notes:

> The main thrust of the document was in creating a shared sense of identity as citizens of one state. The shared identity by no means meant that Jews were asked to give up their religion or to accept Muhammad as a prophet. The pact merely stated that Muslims and Jews would have equal status before the law.[34]

Pre-dating the English Magna Carta by six centuries, this treaty was probably the first written constitution ever produced anywhere in the world that provided for a pluralist society.[35] It not only unified all of Madinah, it was also able to keep any foreign enmity from harming any of the citizens for the next ten years.[36] Now all of

31. See *Appendix B*.
32. Aslan, 2006, p. 55.
33. Emerick, 2002, pp. 131-132.
34. Ibid.
35. Salahi, 2013, p. 239.
36. Al-Qahtani, 2007, p. 282.

Madinah gave a pledge of allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ, and it was against this backdrop that the first Muslim community, the *Ummah*, set its roots and it was also there that the Prophet ﷺ established the first seat of Islamic governance.

The Prophet ﷺ often engaged in religious discussions with the Jews during the early days in Madinah. One day, a delegation of sixty Christian priests from the region of Najran went to debate and learn from the man whose teachings were attracting so many of their coreligionists.[37] Thus, the three Abrahamic faiths met in one place. This "Congress of the Three Religions was lively as each side attempted to make its position known."[38] They mostly debated on the nature of Isa [Jesus] عليه السلام and the question of Muhammad's ﷺ prophethood. At this juncture, the Prophet ﷺ reminded his guests that Islam recognises the previous revelations, such as the Gospels and the Torah, as the Qur'an indicates:

> *"Allah! There is no Allah but He – the Living, the Self-Subsisting Eternal. It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the Criterion (of judgement between right and wrong)."* (Qur'an 3:1-4)

Then during the Congress the Prophet ﷺ called them to look for commonalities between their faiths since Islam too is a monotheistic faith, as the Qur'an says:

> *"Say: 'O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than Allah.' If then they turn back, say ye: 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will).'"* (Qur'an 3:64)

37. Ibn Ishaq, 2004, pp. 269-277.
38. Emerick, 2002, p. 146.

After this Congress, before taking leave, the Christian guests requested to pray, and the Prophet ﷺ permitted them to pray in his mosque, which today is the second holiest site in Islam. Furthermore, having been impressed with the teachings of Islam, the Christian guests "invited the Prophet ﷺ to send with them an envoy who would live with them, answer their questions, and, if needed, judge some of their affairs."[39] That such a multi-faith dialogue took place 1400 years ago is testament to the tolerant and peaceful nature of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.[40]

Less than two years after the emigration to Madinah and fifteen years after the revelation of the first verses of the Qur'an, the following verses of the Qur'an were revealed:

> *"To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged – and verily Allah is Most Powerful for their aid. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right – (for no cause) except that they say, 'Our Lord is Allah'. Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another there would surely have pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure."* (Qur'an 22:39-40)

Thus after fifteen years of nonviolence, the Creator Himself gave the Muslims permission for self-defence and the permission to fight for their religious rights. It is pertinent to ask why the command for self-defence came when the Muslims could now practise their faith in Madinah without the persecution that they had endured in Makkah. Although the Muslims had moved past the stage of severe hardship and persecution on an individual level, they were still subject to constant threat of attack from the Jews and hypocrites within Madinah as well as Arab tribes within the region who would have loved nothing more than to destroy the Prophet ﷺ and his growing band of followers of this new religion. After all, Islam

39. Ramadan, 2007, p. 116.
40. For details on this Congress see Ibn Ishaq, 2004, pp. 269-276.

threatened the existence of the Jews and the privileged lifestyle and customs of the Arabs. The hypocrites were headed by Abdullah ibn Ubayy who would have been king of Madinah had not the Prophet ﷺ become the leader. In addition, the Muslims were still being troubled by the Makkans. They had sanctions placed on their livelihood and had religious restrictions placed on them when they wanted to visit the Kabah in Makkah in order to perform the pilgrimage.[41] Thus, if the verses permitting self-defence had not been revealed, it is quite certain that the small Muslim state would not have survived these hostilities.

Initially, the Prophet ﷺ sent out reconnaissance expeditions every two months or so to familiarise themselves with the area around Madinah and the tribes settled there. It was in the nature of these tribes to launch raids on their neighbours, so it was in order to gather intelligence that these first expeditions were sent out, rather than for fighting.[42] In fact, the Prophet ﷺ was able to draw up peace treaties with a number of the tribes that lived there, so that in case of a war with Quraysh, these tribes would not side with the Makkans.[43] Small groups of Muslims also went out to threaten the caravans on the trade routes of the Makkan Quraysh. This was not done for material gain, since the caravans remained largely untouched and there were no casualties. The main aim of these expeditions was to impress upon the Quraysh that their trade routes were not secure in the hope that they would come to an agreement with the Muslims. Nevertheless, it is worth noting at this point that when the Muslims left Makkah, they also left their wealth, property and livestock behind, which was promptly seized by the Quraysh. Thus it was not an entirely illegitimate notion that the Muslims try to recover some of their losses.[44]

It was in defence of one of their caravans that Quraysh gathered an army of one thousand men against the Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ sent a message to the Quraysh advocating that war was unnecessary and suggested a peace agreement.[45] It was only

41. Ramadan, 2007, p. 97.
42. Salahi, 2013, p. 217.
43. Al-Ismail, 2006, p. 188.
44. Ibid, p. 218.
45. Salahi, 2013, p. 217.

when that request was rejected and Quraysh made the first move that the Battle of Badr commenced. Even at that point, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ordered his three hundred fighters not to kill those of the Makkan army that had been benevolent towards the Muslims in the Makkan era. The battle ended in a Muslim victory and the total loss of lives was eighty-four.

The following year, the Muslims suffered their only defeat at the Battle of Uhud. After the battle was over, the women of the Quraysh began to mutilate the dead bodies of the Muslim fighters. They cut the noses and ears from the dead bodies and strung them into necklaces. One woman named Hind cut open the body of the Prophet's uncle and chewed his liver and heart.[46] The Prophet ﷺ was heart-broken to see the body of his uncle in this state and, in a moment of emotion, vowed to exact revenge. At that point, the following verses of the Qur'an were revealed:

> *"If you want to retaliate, retaliate to the same degree as the injury done to you. But if you are patient, it is better to be patient. Be patient. But your patience is only with Allah. Do not be grieved by them and do not be constricted by the plots they hatch."* (Qur'an 16:126-127)

The Prophet ﷺ forgave the Quraysh and forbade the Muslims from ever mutilating the dead.[47]

It was with a spirit of compassion that Prophet ﷺ conducted his military command. His strategy was not to cause maximum destruction to life, property and land, or to commit atrocities to annihilate his enemy. He worked in such a way as to discourage the opposition from fighting in the first place. A classic example of this is the Battle of the Trench. Here the Muslims were faced with the threat of the multiple and well-equipped armies of the Jews and seven Arab tribes invading Madinah itself. A Persian Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, Salman al-Farsi, suggested that the Muslims dig a wide and deep trench around the city – a tactic unheard of by the

46. Sardar, 2007, p. 43.
47. Al-Ismail, 2006, p. 255.

Arabs. The armies were unable to reach the city and the hostilities had to cease with minimal deaths on the battlefield.

Islamic ethics dictates that Muslims cannot launch a surprise attack on the enemy and the Prophet ﷺ, although he used the element of surprise, did not use it to inflict death on the enemy or score a quick victory. On the basis of intelligence that he had received, the Prophet ﷺ and his men turned up at Mustaliq before the enemy was prepared for battle. He offered them a peace agreement and when this was rejected, fighting began. Similarly, at the Battle of Khaybar, the Jews were not expecting the Muslim army to appear as soon as they did because they were out tending to their fields. The Prophet ﷺ gave them time to lock themselves into forts.[48] The Jews locked the women and children in two forts, their valuables in a third and the fighters occupied a fourth fort. The Muslim army did not go near the first three forts, as per the Shariah instruction that women, children and the wealth of the enemy are not to be disturbed during the fighting. He also did not attack a retreating army after it had admitted defeat. He let his enemy leave without fear of a rearguard attack.[49] When the Prophet ﷺ fought the Jews, it has been recorded that he desisted from fighting on the Sabbath out of respect for the Jewish faith.[50]

He had a similarly high moral standard when it came to the treatment of prisoners of war. After the Battle of Badr, the Muslims had prisoners of war for the first time. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ specifically commanded his followers that they be treated kindly while in Muslim custody. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ took a total of 6564 prisoners of war during his military years, of whom only two were executed for crimes. 6347 were released while the remaining 215 voluntarily accepted Islam there and then.[51]

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ preferred the option of peace rather than war and one instance in which he made many compromises in order to secure peace was at Hudaybiyyah in 628 CE. It had been six years since the Muslims had emigrated to Madinah and they

48. Salahi, 2013, p. 221.
49. Ibid, p. 232.
50. Sardar, 2007, p. 46.
51. Doi & Clarke, 2008, p. 677.

wished to come to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage and visit the Kabah. Fourteen hundred Muslims approached Makkah in simple pilgrim's garb of two unstitched pieces of cloth, without weapons (apart from the swords that every traveller in the desert carries) and their sacrificial camels. The Quraysh of Makkah refused to let the Muslims enter in order to perform their Umrah or lesser pilgrimage and gathered an army ready to fight. But the Prophet ﷺ had not come to fight and so he began long and laborious negotiations with the Quraysh that lead to the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah. Some of the terms of the treaty were:

1. War would be suspended for ten years, and no party would engage in any hostility, open or secret against the other.
2. If anyone during that period from among the Quraysh defected to Muhammad's camp, without his guardian's permission, he would be returned back to Makkah. But if a Companion of Muhammad were to defect to the Quraysh, there would be no requirement for his return.
3. Every Arab tribe would have the option to join either side as its ally and enter the treaty.
4. Muhammad and his men would go back [to Madinah] that year. They could come the following year for Umrah [minor pilgrimage] and stay in Makkah for three days, provided they bring only one sheathed sword each, and no other weapon of war. In those three days, the Makkans would vacate the city for them (so that there was no chance of conflict), but they would not be allowed to take along any Makkan on return.[52]

The Muslims took it as an affront to their dignity that they turn back to Madinah, 400km away, without performing the pilgrimage that year despite being within sight of the Kabah. They felt that the Prophet ﷺ had compromised too much. Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ knew that there was no other alternative for peace. So he preferred a temporary setback to continuing warfare.

Although the treaty affirmed a ten year period of peace between the two sides, it was only two years before the Makkans broke the

52. Malik, 1997, p. 564.

treaty.[53] In response, the Prophet ﷺ took ten thousand Muslims with him and marched peacefully to Makkah.[54] This was his beloved place of birth and city of the Holy Kabah. He did not want bloodshed or fighting here.

As it was, the Muslims were able to enter Makkah without resistance. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ entered the city in such a manner that while bowing in humility his head was touching the saddle of his camel.[55] He set up a tent to stay in (his Makkan house had been sold off by the Quraysh when he emigrated) then performed the pilgrimage.

The next day, the Quraysh gathered to find out what their fate would be and how the Prophet ﷺ would exact revenge for the twenty-one years of hostilities that he and his followers had endured at their hands. The Prophet ﷺ asked them, "People of Quraysh, what do you think I will do to you?" They replied, "You are a gracious brother and noble kinsman." To which the Prophet ﷺ simply said, "Go, you are all free men."

And with these simple words, the Prophet ﷺ forgave everything he and his people had ever endured – the ridicule, the assassination plots, the torture and the driving out from their homes. He even forgave Hind, who had mutilated his uncle's body. He did not demand that anyone convert to Islam[56] and he took nothing from the Makkans. In fact when he took the keys of the Kabah from the pagan custodian in order to clean it, he returned the keys back to him once he had finished his work. When asked by the amazed pagan custodian why the Prophet ﷺ, when he had conquered Makkah, had returned the keys, the Prophet ﷺ replied with verses from the Qur'an:[57]

> *"Allah commands you to return to their owners the things you hold on trust and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice. How excellent is what*

53. Armstrong, 2000, p. xiv. Also see *Appendix C* for more details on the treaty.
54. Conquest here may not be the appropriate word considering that the city was not conquered in a way that involved any force or resistance from either side. For this reason, it is often referred to as the 'opening' of Makkah.
55. Hussain, 2009, pp. 38-39.
56. Armstrong, 2000, p. xiv.
57. Al-Ismail, 2006, p. 363.

Allah exhorts you to do! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing." (Qur'an 4:58)

It was an unconditional pardon that came from an exceptional man. It was not through weakness that the pardon was issued for the Prophet ﷺ had ten thousand men at his disposal to exact his revenge, it was out of mercy. And it is that mercy and justice that is the embodiment of Islam and which the Prophet ﷺ was sent to convey, as the Qur'an said regarding him ﷺ:

"We only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds." (Qur'an 21:107)

In the eight years between receiving the self-defence verses and his death, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ personally headed his army on twenty-eight occasions. On nineteen of these occasions, there was no fighting or bloodshed because the enemy would retreat before fighting commenced.[58] In most others, the fighting and casualties were minimal because of the tactics employed by the Prophet ﷺ. In fact, over this entire period the total loss of life was 255 Muslims and 759 non-Muslims, none of which were civilians.[59] As a rough estimate, the percentage of deaths to total participants in these wars is approximately 1.5%. What is most significant here is that he never broke a treaty made with his neighbours or enemies, knowing that Islam strictly forbids the breaking of any agreement or covenant (Qur'an 8:55-56).[60]

Far from being a blood-thirsty warrior wielding a sword in his hand and a Qur'an in the other, the Prophet ﷺ was actually a peacemaker. "Single-handedly, Muhammad had brought peace to war-torn Arabia"[61] and none had achieved such success before, when it comes to bringing a people together in a very short period of time and establishing a permanent rule in the region. Moreover, he "destroyed idol worship and replaced the arrogance and violence, drunkenness

58. Salahi, 2013, p. 229.
59. Doi & Clarke, 2008, p. 677.
60. See also Qur'an, 17:34, or 2:177, etc.
61. Armstrong, 2000, p. 23.

and immorality of the Arabs, by humility and compassion, harmony and generosity, creating a truly illuminated society."[62]

The Character of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

What is most exceptional about the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is that he was as noble and exceptional off the battlefield as he was on it. In Islam, it is not sufficient to simply fulfil the rituals and practices of the faith without accompanying it with a noble character. It is through a good character that one can repel the evil within and around oneself and others. Conversely, a bad character can cause much damage to one's self and others. According to the Qur'an, the Prophet ﷺ had the best and most sublime character,[63] which is the foundation for achieving inner peace. This then radiates out as outer peace and is what makes for a successful diplomat who resolves conflicts and realises peaceful solutions to difficult situations.[64] The most exceptional facet of the Prophet's character was that he was forgiving, generous and merciful, not only to his friends and followers but to everyone whom he met, which is why it is said that anyone who met him once would long to meet with him again.[65]

His honesty was so exemplary that even his staunchest enemies could not deny this. The Makkans used to give their valuables for safekeeping to the young Muhammad ﷺ and this practice continued even after he became prophet. We have mentioned that the Quraysh initiated an assassination plot against the Prophet ﷺ to prevent him migrating to Madinah. By this stage, the Prophet ﷺ held the valuables of many non-Muslims in his possession. On the night of the planned assassination attempt, he gave all of these deposits to his cousin Ali, to return to their rightful owners – the very people trying to kill him.[66]

The Prophet ﷺ was a most patient man; patient in the face of adversity and personal loss as well as being patient as a teacher

62. Bewley, 2016, p. 30-31.
63. Qur'an 68:4.
64. Refer back to Chapter 3 for a discussion on inner and outer peace.
65. Hussain, 2009, p. 29.
66. Salahi, 2013, p. 47.

and with the people around him. In addition to patience, he had a gentleness – "a state of dignified bearing, and remaining calm despite provocation"[67] when dealing rough and uncultured people. Once a Bedouin came to ask the Prophet ﷺ for some money, he pulled at the Prophet's ﷺ coat so violently that his neck was marked. Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ showed no signs of annoyance and asked that the Bedouin be given what he had asked for.[68]

As a family man, the Prophet ﷺ was an attentive husband and carried out his share of the household duties. His wife, Aishah ؓ reports that he mended his own clothes and shoes, milked the sheep and served himself.[69] He was the loving father of four daughters, whom he treated with great love and respect, at a time when having daughters was considered burdensome. He was also a devoted grandfather. He was seen carrying his granddaughter in his arms while leading the congregational prayer in the mosque.[70] Another report states that he saw his two young grandsons walking towards him in the mosque while he was giving a sermon. He stopped, picked them up, sat them beside him and continued with his sermon.[71] This was unprecedented behaviour in a society where men considered their wives to be their possessions, their daughters to be a liability and it was not considered masculine to show affection to children.

The Prophet's home life was austere and unpretentious. He ate on the ground and slept on the ground on a mattress that left marks on his body. He did not sleep until he had given away all the money in his house to the extent that he and his household often did without food. He was, however, extremely welcoming to visitors, spreading his cloak for them to sit on and sharing whatever he had. He chose to live his life in this manner even though he was offered comfort on numerous occasions by his Companions.

On a social level, he visited the sick, no matter how difficult the journey and asked after the well-being of the people he knew. He sat with the poor and spoke to them with equality, he accepted the invitations of all who invited him: slaves or nobles alike. He

67. As qtd. in Hussain, 2009, p. 44.
68. From a hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.
69. From a hadith in *Sunan al-Bayhaqi*.
70. From a hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
71. Salahi, 2013, p. 127.

was even sympathetic to animals. It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ entered a farm and saw a camel. The Prophet ﷺ rubbed the camel's ears and asked to whom the camel belonged. To the owner, he said, "Won't you fear God in the treatment of this animal which God has placed in your hand? The camel complained to me that you keep him hungry and overwork him."[72]

It is character, integrity, honesty and compassion of this magnitude that melts the hardest of hearts, initiates social change for the better, resolves conflicts and radiates peace. These were not qualities that lived and died with the Prophet ﷺ but an example of how Muslims all over the world and through all time should conduct themselves. No matter what position a Muslim holds, a king or a labourer, a worker or a parent, an adult or a youth, they all try to emulate the example of the Prophet ﷺ, because for a Muslim the only people worth emulating are the prophets, with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ being the last and the final one. On the extraordinary example of the Prophet ﷺ, nineteenth century French statesman, Alphonse de Lamartine, wrote:

> If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only they founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then-inhabited world; and more than that he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls.... His forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire, his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. ... Philosopher,

72. Salahi, 2013, p. 136.

> orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?[73]

Even Michael Hart, an American self-declared white separatist, who sees Islam as a threat to Western civilisation, could not deny the multi-dimensional greatness of the Prophet ﷺ. In his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History,* Hart ranks Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as number one. He opens the chapter with the note, "My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and the secular levels."[74]

73. Lamartine, 1854, pp. 276-77.
74. Hart, 1978, p. 3.

Chapter 6

In the Footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ

Notable Examples of Prophetic Conduct

The Prophet's example of tolerance and forgiveness following the Conquest of Makkah did not cease with his passing away and there are many shining examples of Muslim leaders throughout the following centuries that have acted with equal magnanimity. Some of these leaders, to name a few, include Umar bin al-Khattab ﷺ and his account of the Conquest of Jerusalem in 637 CE; Salahudin al-Ayyubi on the Conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 CE, and Sultan Mehmet Fatih on the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 CE.

The Muslims had conquered Jerusalem in 637 under the rule of Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab ﷺ in

> the most peaceful and bloodless conquest the city had yet seen in its long and tragic history. Once the Christians had surrendered, there was no killing, no destruction of property, no burning of rival religious symbols, no expulsions or expropriations, and no attempt to force the inhabitants to embrace Islam. If a respect for the previous occupants of the city is the sign of the integrity of a monotheistic power, Islam began its long tenure in Jerusalem very well indeed.[1]

1. Armstrong, 1996, p. 228.

At the request of Patriarch Sophronius, Caliph Umar ﷺ personally travelled to Jerusalem from Madinah (approximately 1300 km) to receive the keys of the surrendered city. The Patriarch is said to have taken the Caliph on a guided tour of the city's holy sites including the Holy Sepulchre (where Isa [Jesus] ﷺ is alleged to have been buried). Realising that it was the time for prayer, the patriarch invited Caliph Umar ﷺ to offer his prayers in the church. Umar ﷺ refused courteously and prayed on the busy street instead. He then explained to the patriarch that had he offered his prayers in the Church, that later Muslims may have tried to convert it into a mosque.[2] Thus in order to avert potential Christian-Muslim tensions, he took this diplomatic course of action. As the new ruler of Jerusalem, Caliph Umar ﷺ made an agreement with the Christian leaders who surrendered Jerusalem.[3] In summary, it assured the Christians that their lives, property and religion would be safe and that there would be no compulsion to convert. It also gave them the right of protection under Islamic rule in return for payment of taxes. "This assurance stands as an important reference text and contains the basic principles for a multicultural society that are applicable at all times and in all places."[4]

Moving forward in history, Salah ad-Din Ayubi (r. 1174 – 1193 CE) is recognised by both Muslims and Christians as a most noble and compassionate ruler. Known as Salahudin (or Saladin in the Western world), he fought the Crusaders and put an end to the medieval Crusades. After capturing almost every Crusader city in the Middle East, Salahudin laid siege to Jerusalem and conquered it in 1187. Decades earlier, the Christian Crusaders had massacred every living person (Jewish and Muslim) within the walls of the city when they had taken Jerusalem in 1099. Describing what had taken place then, Raymond of Aguiles, an eye-witness wrote, "If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple of the Porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins."[5] Now that the city had surrendered

2. Kennedy, 2007, pp. 92-93.
3. See *Appendix D*.
4. Abu-Munshar, 2006, p. 68.
5. As qtd. in Armstrong, 1996, p. 274.

to Salahudin, he had the power to exact revenge upon the Christian Crusaders. However, to everyone's surprise, Salahudin allowed them to walk freely out of the city – an echo of the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ actions at the Conquest of Makkah centuries earlier. He gave the same assurance to the inhabitants of Jerusalem that Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab ؓ had done centuries earlier regarding safety, protection and freedom of worship for all,[6] and treated "Muslims, Christians and Jews alike with equal fairness".[7] Thus an era of harmonious co-existence between the three monotheistic faiths was re-established under Islamic rule.

Away from the battlefield, Salahudin displayed the same chivalrous behaviour. It was during the Third Crusade that King Richard I fell ill with fever while commanding the Crusaders. Hearing of this, Salahudin, arranged for his personal physician[8] to visit the Christian king as well as sending him fruits and snow to chill his drinks as treatment. At Arsuf, when King Richard lost his horse in battle, Salahudin had two replacements sent to him so that he would not be disadvantaged on the battlefield.[9] This was extraordinary behaviour given that the two rulers were in combat with each other. Nevertheless, as a result, Salahudin's kindness and noble attitude, won him respect not only by Muslims but also by many Western writers.[10] On this note, historian René Grousset, for example, wrote, "It is equally true that his [Salahudin's] generosity, his piety, devoid of fanaticism, that flower of liberality and courtesy which had been the model of our old chroniclers, won him no less popularity in Frankish Syria than in the lands of Islam."[11] This was Salahudin, the Kurdish Sultan of Egypt and Syria, whose example continues to inspire people in the Muslim world and beyond, to this day.

6. Abu-Munshar, 2006, p.78.
7. Haye, 1950, p. 65.
8. By this time, Islamic sciences (including medicine) had reached their pinnacle and were far in advance of the knowledge that would have been available in Christian Europe. See *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*, 2007. See also Ahsan's *Muslim Heritage and the 21st Century*, 2002.
9. Stanton et. al., 2012, p. 97.
10. As-Sibaa'ie, 2005, p. 156.
11. Grousset, 1970, n. p. See also 'The Byzantines and Saladin, 1185-1192' by Charles Brand, 1962 in *Speculum*.

However, two centuries later, another powerful figure was to follow the same path of Salahudin, laid out for both of them by the Prophet ﷺ himself. This was the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, known in the West as Mehmet the Conqueror. Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih (r. 1444 – 1481 CE), a devout Muslim, was only 21 when he conquered Constantinople in 1453. It is said that after the conquest, the young sultan entered the Hagia Sofia church, where many people had fled to for their safety, and reassured everyone that they were all free and protected by the men of the Sultan. The Sultan not only asked everyone to return peacefully to their homes, he also made sure that they were free to have their priests, observe their own laws, and practise their religion in his new city, now called Istanbul.[12]

Most of the Ottoman sultans were well known for their tolerance towards people of all religions. During the latter part of the fifteenth century, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella set up The Spanish Inquisition that essentially forced Jews and Muslims to either convert to Catholicism or leave Spain. The Ottoman Empire willingly absorbed those Jews, Muslims and people of other faiths that were persecuted and exiled by the church. In fact the Jewish community in Istanbul today are the descendants of those Jews who fled from Spain five centuries ago.[13] At the same time, while the Christians of Europe were suffering at the hands of their harsh rulers, the Ottomans maintained good relations with the neighbouring lands of Greece, Bulgaria, the Albanian lands and others. The region later accepted Islam peacefully in great numbers because of this Ottoman tolerance and justice.[14]

All of these exemplary rulers, like the Prophet ﷺ, entered their conquered cities and left their inhabitants, Muslim or otherwise, to get on with their lives without fear of persecution or the pressure of conversion, precisely as the Qur'an calls, "*Let there be no compulsion in religion*" (2:256) and "*To you [non-Muslims] be your religion and to me mine*" (109:6). This Qur'anic spirit of tolerance, acceptance and compassion has been embodied and practised by Muslim individuals and societies around the globe throughout the history

12. As-Sibaa'ie, 2005, pp. 156-157.
13. Nagy, 2008, p. 125.
14. As-Sibaa'ie, 2005, pp. 156-157.

of the Islamic Caliphate, from seventh century Arabia, through to medieval Muslim Spain[15] and the Ottoman Empire.

Even in the recent history of the twentieth century, Muslim societies and individuals have adhered to the principles passed down to them by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. During the First World War, Said Nursi (1877-1960), a renowned theologian and writer, showed great character during the conflict between the Turks and Armenians, while defending a Turkish village from Armenian attack. Once the Turks had defeated the Armenians, "he collected together all the Armenian women and children from the surrounding area to save them from retaliatory action, which he stated was contrary to the Shariah, and handed them over to Armenian forces." This fine example of Prophetic conduct impressed the Armenians so much that they also refrained from attacking civilians.[16] He continued to advocate nonviolence and cooperation throughout his life. His reaction to the deeply nationalistic, anti-religious Kemalist movement of the time was through peaceful *jihad* or "*jihad* of the word" by which he hoped would work "for the preservation of internal order and peace and stability in society."[17] His philosophy of peace, compassion and tolerance continue to live on around the world with his students and through his teachings to this day.

After Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Albania, a country with a 70% Muslim population, offered a safe haven for Holocaust refugees from Germany and other European countries. Following German occupation during the Second World War, Albanians were ordered to hand over the Jews in the country to the Germans. The Albanians refused and instead offered the Jews every protection they could afford despite going through occupation, war and poverty themselves. The result was that not a single Jew under Albanian hospitality suffered at the hands of the Nazis, and there were more Jews in Albania at the end of the Second World War than at the start.[18] Similar heroic acts

15. On the topic of Muslim tolerance and relations with non-Muslims in Spain, see *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain* by Maria Menocal.
16. Vahide, 2005, p. 116-117.
17. Vahide, 1992, p. 352.
18. See *Rescue in Albania: One hundred percent of Jews in Albania rescued from Holocaust* by Harvey Sarner.

at the time were also witnessed in the Muslim quarters of France, where Jews were able to find refuge in the Grand Mosque of Paris.[19]

And it is not only men that have shaped Islamic history, but Muslim women are also known for their active contributions to a variety of fields in society as well as exemplifying the spirit of compassion, justice and peace.

Muslim Women as Champions of Peace

In recent times, Muslim women and particularly those in the Middle East, have been viewed as being disempowered, subordinate to men and even oppressed. With the advent of Islam, the Qur'an, unlike any other previous scripture, had unequivocally stated that both men and women were equal in the sight of Allah,[20] and that they would receive equally great rewards for their service to Allah and His creation:[21]

> *"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to their actions."* (Qur'an 4:124 and 16:97)

It was against this background of equality that Muslim women have enjoyed a high status and played an active role in society since the earliest days of Islam. Contrary to stereotypical assumptions, as early as the seventh century, Muslim women have participated in public life, and just like men, they have made strong contributions to the development of their societies. This was the case in the Muslim World until very recently in history. (It is often said that this decline of women's status in the Muslim world began with the Western colonisation of Muslim lands in the latter part of the nineteenth century: a period that also coincides with the rapid decline of the Ottoman Empire.)[22]

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19. See *The Grand Mosque of Paris: A story of how Muslims rescued Jews during the Holocaust* by Ruelle & Desaix.
20. See Nasr, 2004*b*, p. 188.
21. For more on the topic, see *The Status of Woman in Islam* by Jamal Badawi.
22. See Siddiqui, 2001.

It should be noted here, however, that we cannot and should not use modern Western standards to measure the success of Muslim women, or any other, since that would imply that only through her engagement in public life can a woman contribute to peace or benefit society at large. On the contrary, constructing a society of peace, from an Islamic point of view, begins with creating an oasis of peace within the home and it is here that women can and do make a real difference. That is not to say that her role should only be limited to the home, but women can be secure in the knowledge that they are not considered 'less successful' in Islam when they choose to adopt homemaking as their primary role. Muslim women have been and still are active as peacemakers, both in the public arena and at home as mothers, wives, and daughters, all of which are equally valuable contributions to peacemaking in society.

For all of these women, the role models are, of course, none other than the wives, daughters and female Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, who were all instrumental in forming a peaceful society, each using their own particular strengths and skills. The Prophet's first wife, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid ؓ, was, at the age of forty, a successful and wealthy businesswoman in her own right when she married Muhammad ﷺ and subsequently became the mother of his four daughters (their two sons died in infancy). After fifteen years of marriage, her husband became the Prophet and she was the first person to accept his message without hesitation. Her support for the Prophet ﷺ was unwavering and she suffered alongside him in those difficult early days of Islam. She devoted her efforts and wealth to help spread the message of Islam, helping to free slaves, and providing food and shelter to the new Muslims in Makkah.[23] His later wives, like Aishah, Hafsa, Umm Habiba and Umm Salama ؓ, all played a critical role in preserving, transmitting and teaching the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ to the community both during his lifetime and especially after his death. Aishah bint Abu Bakr ؓ was known for her sharp mind, good memory and eloquence of speech. She was a source of knowledge and wisdom to both men and women until her death,

23. Thomson, 2012, p. 15; see also *Great Women of Islam* by Mahmood Ghadanfar.

nearly fifty years after that of the Prophet ﷺ.[24] Umm Salama, was known for her intelligence and political acumen and the Prophet ﷺ is known to have asked her advice in many tricky situations.[25] All of the *Umm al-Mu'mineen* (Mother of the Believers), as the Prophet's wives are respectfully known, lived dignified lives of sacrifice, humility and service to others, and together with the daughters and female Companions of the Prophet ﷺ were instrumental in passing the Prophetic spirit directly to the next generation and indirectly as role models for Muslim women the world over.

One of the most powerful episodes of nonviolence and faith that has been documented occurred in the fourteenth century, when religious scholar Ibn Qunfundh recorded the story of Lala Aziza of Seksawa in Morocco, who used the power of words and faith alone to avert conflict. General Al-Hintati and his army of six thousand men were on their way to conquer Seksawa when Lala Aziza walked out in front of him and his army alone. She spoke eloquently to him of Allah's command for justice and the sin of harming Allah's creation. That was enough to send the General and his army back. He later told Ibn Qunfundh, "She knew what was going on inside of me...I was not able to counter her argument, to reject her requests."[26] This case highlights the immense power of words as a weapon for the force of good.

All of these great people, men and women, adopted the way of the Prophet ﷺ and embodied the Islamic principles of justice, compassion, humility, forgiveness and service to Allah and His creation, both in their public and private lives. They are remembered centuries after their passing, not for what they may have ever possessed in material terms, but for the greatness of their characters. As the Prophet ﷺ said, "The best amongst you are the best in character and manners."[27]

24. Thomson, 2012, p. 29.
25. Thomson, 2012, p. 59.
26. Satha-Anand in Ram & Summy, Eds., 2008, p. 139.
27. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

Part Four

Human Nature and Conflict

Chapter 7

Examining Human Nature to Understand Conflict

While the nature of prophets is stable and upright, the nature of the common person in general has repeatedly proven itself to be far more vulnerable and prone to wrongdoing as the Qur'an simply states, *"Man was created weak"* (Qur'an 4:28). This weakness refers to the weakness in man's character that gives rise to instability in feelings, thoughts and emotions, which in turn manifest themselves as negative traits such as greed, arrogance, anger, jealousy and hypocrisy. According to Islamic thought, these are symptoms of a diseased heart. The role of the heart will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, but for now we will confine the discussion to what is revealed in the Qur'an about the nature of Allah's most superior creation, that is mankind. Understanding human nature is the most basic step towards understanding why conflict occurs in the first place and ultimately, how to work towards resolving it.

The Arabic word that is given to the Islamic concept of human nature is *fitrah*. According to the Arabic-English lexicon, it can be defined as: "The natural constitution with which a child is created in his mother's womb; the faculty of knowing God, with which He has

created mankind."[1] It can also be translated as "original purity" or "primordial faith".[2] According to the Qur'an[3] and hadith[4], everyone is born in this state of purity, recognising the Oneness of God (*Tawhid*)[5] and with an inclination to worship Him. It is later in life that this condition is altered through social and family influences.

Allah created mankind to be His vicegerent on earth.[6] In other words, Allah gave the enormous privilege and responsibility of taking care of the earth and all that is in it to each and every human being. He gave man power over all things, a 'manual' of how to live life (His revealed scriptures), intellect and emotions, and free will. The endowment of free will is a most important factor because:

> This is the essence of his [man's] humanity and the basis of his responsibility to his Creator. Without man's relative free will life would be meaningless and God's covenant with man would be in vain. Without human free will, God would be defeating His own purpose and man would be completely incapable of bearing any responsibility.[7]

The perfect vicegerent is one who, through his free will, chooses to submit to Allah and uses his power over nature in a positive and progressive manner and this is in accordance with his *fitrah*. The result is a state of perfect peace and harmony both within and among

1. Lane, 1984, p. 2416.
2. Mohamed, 1996, p. 2.
3. *"So set your face firmly towards the Deen [life-transaction], as a pure natural believer, Allah's natural pattern [fitrah] on which He made mankind"* (Qur'an 30:30).
4. "There is not a newborn child who is not born in a state of *fitrah*. His parents then make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian, just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed at birth?" (Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*).
5. The concept of the Oneness of Allah in Islam is called *tawhid*. As an indication of monotheism, *tawhid* is Islam's most fundamental concept holding that Allah is One, Unique and Everlasting; that he was not begotten and neither does he beget. This is succinctly expressed in Qur'an (112).
6. The word used in the Qur'an for vicegerent is "khalifa" (Qur'an 2:30). The root of the word is the Arabic verb 'khalafa' which means 'came after or succeeded' and carries the concept that Allah has chosen human beings to be His caretakers on earth, ruling it according to His divine law.
7. 'Abd al 'Ati, 1998, p. 52.

all people and their environment, whereby mankind achieves his highest potential.

Nevertheless, mankind is also capable of using his free will to exploit nature and other human beings for his own selfish gains, as is evident around us. He is capable of a level of evil and destruction that is truly incredible and thereby he reaches his lowest point. He exists purely to satisfy his own whims, but neither achieves peace within himself nor allows the remainder of humanity to live in peace. Such a person has, according to Islamic thought, deviated from the original state of *fitrah* and forgotten the purpose of his creation and his submission to Allah.

It would be pertinent to ask how two such diverging natures can exist in the same species of creation. The answer to the dual nature of man lies in the Qur'an when Allah states that He formed man from *"sounding clay from mud moulded into shape"* and then *"breathed into him of My spirit"* (Qur'an 15:29-30). Thus there are two dimensions to man's nature: the spiritual self or soul (*ruh*) and the biological and psychical self (*nafs*). The *ruh* tends towards the divine and pulls man towards his higher purpose, while the *nafs* has a selfish desire to fulfil its own pleasures. When human beings submit to the *nafs* and detach the physical self from the spiritual, then there is no limit to the depths of depravity that they can plunge to in order to satisfy their craving for power, wealth, status and so on. However, joining the *nafs* to the *ruh* is the ultimate realisation of *fitrah* and is the most balanced state that a person can be in. The choice of which path to take rests entirely with the individual.

It is this dual nature that leaves man open to certain weaknesses and vulnerabilities as Allah has alluded to in the Qur'an on several occasions. Man is inherently hasty[8] and impatient[9], wishing to achieve his goals in as short a space of time as possible. However, he forgets that the ultimate goal is prosperity in the Hereafter and that requires patience and forbearance in this life. Another weakness is man's unquenchable desire for material wealth as the hadith eloquently states, "If the son of Adam were to possess two valleys of

8. *"For man is given to hasty deeds"* (Qur'an 17:11).
9. *"Truly man was created very impatient – fretful when evil touches him and niggardly when good reaches him"* (Qur'an 70:19-21).

riches, he would long for a third one. And the stomach of the son of Adam is not filled but with dust."[10] And it seems to be in this pursuit for material wealth that man also becomes heedless and neglectful of his duties to Allah.[11] Interestingly, the Arabic word used in the Qur'an for humans is *insaan*, which has the root (N-S-Y) meaning "to forget".[12] From this we can infer that human beings by their very nature are forgetful. This forgetfulness can take on the meaning of temporarily forgetting a command of Allah as did the Prophet Adam ﷺ when he ate from the forbidden tree (Qur'an 20:115) or, at worst, forgetting the purpose of life and creation itself.[13] There is wisdom in creating mankind with inherent weaknesses because in struggling to overcome these, human beings have an opportunity for self-growth and spiritual progress. Without struggle there is no progress. And should man ever feel overwhelmed in his struggle, he has his Lord's reassurance, *"On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear"* (Qur'an 2:286).

The story of the 'fall' of Adam ﷺ and Hawwa [Eve] not only highlights the forgetful nature of human beings but also reminds man to be wary of Satan. It was Satan who caused Adam ﷺ and Hawwa [Eve] to *"slip from the Garden, and get them out of the state of felicity in which they had been"* (Qur'an 2:36). According to the commentary of this verse, this "denotes the idea of Evil gradually tempting man from a higher to a lower state"[14] and acts as a warning to mankind to be on their guard against such temptation. Such temptation is not always apparent as evil because Satan swore to both Adam ﷺ and Hawwa [Eve] that *"he was their sincere adviser"* and it was *"by deceit he brought about their fall"* (Qur'an 7:21-22). So the lesson is clear: *"O Children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you in the same manner as he got your parents out of the Garden"* (Qur'an 7:27). The other point of interest is that, according to Islam, both Adam ﷺ and Hawwa [Eve] were equally culpable for the sin, they both acknowledged their wrongdoing and both asked for

10. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
11. *"But verily many among mankind are heedless of our signs!"* (Qur'an 10:92).
12. Lane, 1984, p. 3303.
13. Başar, 2008.
14. Ali, 1989, p. 25.

forgiveness (Qur'an 7:23). Allah forgave them both (Qur'an 2:37) and thus there is no doctrine of 'original sin' in Islam or the idea that one can expiate another's sin.

The concept of sin is Islam is explained in the hadith, "When the servant [of Allah] performs a sin, a black spot appears on his heart, and if he seeks forgiveness this black spot is removed, and if he returns to sin the black spot grows until his heart becomes black, and this is the *Ran* that Allah mentions in His Book: *"Nay! But on their hearts is the Ran (covering of sins and evil deeds) which they used to earn"* (Qur'an 83:14)."[15] In other words:

> [W]hen a person persistently adheres to false beliefs and refuses to listen to the voice of truth, he gradually loses the ability to perceive truth, so that finally, as it were, a seal is set upon his heart. But surely it is a consequence of man's choice and not an act of 'predestination'.[16]

It is through sincere repentance[17] that a person can obtain forgiveness for his sins and keep his heart clean, thus remaining as close to his primordial condition of purity. Note that the organ of the body linked with spirituality and the ability to perceive truth is the heart and not the mind. In fact the heart is of primary importance in Islamic psychology and the next section looks at the role of the heart in human behaviour.

The State of the Heart

In addition to free will and guidance in the form of revealed scripture, Allah has also endowed human beings with faculties of perception, as the Qur'an reminds:

15. Hadith in *Jami at-Tirmidhi.*
16. Ahmad in Ansari, 1992, p. 34.
17. Sincere repentance is to feel remorse for the committed sin, remove the self from that sin, resolve not to commit such a sin again, and ask only Allah for forgiveness every time that sin is remembered.

> *"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that you may give thanks to Allah."* (Qur'an 16:78)

At the basic level, man has been granted sensory organs (ears and eyes etc.) in order to recognise the world around him. He has also been granted intellect and emotions to reason, think and feel both the tangible world and also to gain understanding of the "unseen":[18] the spiritual dimension. Interestingly, the Arabic word for 'heart' has been used to signify the centre of both intelligence and affection in the Qur'an.[19] The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ further elaborated on the role of the heart when he said, "Surely there is in the body a small piece of flesh; if it is good, the whole body is good, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted, and that is surely the heart."[20] This implies that the heart is more than just an organ for pumping blood around the body; it is the seat of the spiritual heart and the gateway to the human soul.[21]

The Qur'an speaks of the human heart and its faculties of understanding and perceiving on many occasions. A perceiving heart is described in the Qur'an as being *"wide awake"* (Qur'an 50:37), *"strong"* (Qur'an 18:14) and the key to eternal success (Qur'an 26:88-89). Hearts that do not understand and perceive the divine truth are described as *"hard"* (Qur'an 6:43), *"sealed"* (Qur'an 9:87), *"tainted"* (Qur'an 2:283) and *"diseased"* (Qur'an 8:49). It indicates that the heart can be cleansed by turning to its Creator: *"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah; for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction"* (Qur'an 13:28). In fact, there is a branch of Islamic theology that deals with the science of purification of the heart (*tazkiyyah*) and the inner aspects of our existence.[22]

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18. In Qur'an 2:3, belief in the "unseen" is a quality of those who have *taqwa* (God-consciousness) and to whom Allah has promised prosperity.
19. Ali, 1989, p. 658.
20. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
21. Mushtaq, 2006, p. 2.
22. See *Tazkiyah: The Islamic Path of Self-Development* by Abdur Rashid Siddiqui (Ed.).

According to this, when Allah is not remembered, "the heart falls into a state of agitation and turmoil. In this state the heart becomes vulnerable to disease because it is undernourished and cut off" from its Creator who gives it life and without this connection the spiritual heart dies.[23] In this regard, the Qur'an says:

> *"Have they not travelled about the earth and do they not have hearts to understand with or ears to hear with? It is not eyes that are blind but hearts in breasts that are blind."* (Qur'an 22:46)

Also:

> *"They have hearts they do not understand with. They have eyes they do not see with. They have ears they do not hear with. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware."* (Qur'an 7:179)

In other words, perceptual processes like seeing and hearing "can be reduced to mere sensations. They can become stimulations without meaning, because the *qalb* [heart] is blocked or sealed"[24] and thus cannot process received information in any meaningful way. This is the state in which a human being becomes lower than "cattle". The decline to such a state come about when a person defers to their lower self (*nafs*) in favour of the highest self (*ruh*), as Zafar Ansari notes:

> The blocking of the cognitive processes take place under special circumstances; when a person is faced with a situation of conflict and resorts to a special type of defence mechanism in which he rationalises actions that are emotionally impelled. Such a person starts with a state of conflict between what his moral judgement

23. Yusuf in Mawlud, 2005, p. 6.
24. *Qalb*, according to Ansari, refers to the heart and "is presumably the opening agency of psyche which transforms the spiritual potentiality into actuality", 1998, p. 6.

> demands, and what is his need for immediate, ultimate and unjustified gratifications. His belief and his practice become completely at variance. Such people begin with a conflict between their conscience and their overt behaviour. But behaviour is a public commitment, and soon they are taken over by the need to resolve this conflict, and to justify their behaviour.[25]

It is not possible to hold high moral values but outwardly act to please selfish desires. Thus people who have a weak moral conscience "have to resolve this situation by believing in what they are practicing, rather than the other way around." It is at this juncture that the belief of a person becomes "so subdued that it completely loses all practical meaning or relevance for life."[26] In fact, if people truly examine the root cause of their troubles (as individuals as well as on a collective basis), the majority are rooted in the human heart. Most personal, community, national and international conflict stems from those issues that Islam classes as diseases of the heart, such as jealousy, hatred, anger, injustice, pride, dishonesty and so on. These diseases have taken hold of hearts for the simple reason that those hearts have forgotten their Creator.

If people are committed to making the world a more harmonious place to live, then they must change their inward state first and achieve peace and balance within. As Qamar-ul Huda wrote, "The traditional theological thought is that once the heart and mind are gradually transformed toward peace – moving away from greed, egocentric desires, suffering, materialism, and harming others – humans then can act peacefully in the world."[27] And this "transformation toward peace" is the very essence of *jihad* – to gain mastery over the lower self, to cleanse and purify the heart and then to try to change the surrounding situation in accordance with the strict principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Such a concept is far removed from 'holy war', as is often translated by some.[28] There is a vast difference between a

25. Ansari, 1998, pp. 6-7.
26. Ibid, p. 7.
27. Huda, 2010, p. xviii.
28. See Winter, 2014 for details. See also Smith-Christopher, 2007.

person who has a diseased heart and one who has a pure heart as the Qur'an draws the following parallels:

> *"The blind and seeing are not the same nor are darkness and light nor are cool shade and fierce heat. The living and dead are not the same."* (Qur'an 35:19-22)

It follows, therefore, that the conduct of both sets of people is also incomparable. For example, "Impure people oppress, and the pure-hearted not only forgive their oppressors, but even elevate them in status..."[29] and this really is the true spirit of Islam.[30]

29. Yusuf in Mawlud, 2005, p. 9.
30. Abu Sufyan, for example, a staunch opponent of Islam before becoming a Muslim, was the leader of the tribe of Quraysh in Makkah, and after the taking of Makkah by the Prophet ﷺ in 630 CE, Abu Sufyan was forgiven for his past transgressions against the Muslims and was even honoured with a greater status of leadership by the Prophet ﷺ himself.

Chapter 8

The Approach of the Qur'an and Sunnah to Achieving and Maintaining Peace

Having outlined to mankind the reality of their nature, the Qur'an and hadith also offer plentiful examples and practical advice regarding self-development, inter-personal relations, diplomatic relations, peace-building, conflict resolution and nonviolence. Contrary to modern belief, the tradition of conflict resolution is not foreign to Islam, but is embedded within the principles of the faith. Unfortunately today there is little mention of this rich Islamic tradition in modern academia. Muslim practitioners in the field have conveyed various conflict resolution methods to Muslim communities showing that Islam has a lot to offer to this field, but their progress "has been hampered by a well-publicised Western assumption that Islamic religion and culture contradict the principles of peace-building, conflict resolution, nonviolence, and even democracy."[1] This section begins by outlining the Islamic view on conflict and then goes through the basic precepts through which conflict can be either be averted, or if it does occur, how to resolve it in the most dignified manner. It is important to mention here

1. Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 217.

that these Islamic approaches, like those of many other religious traditions, do not necessarily contradict with Western conflict resolution methods. Although there can be exceptions, depending on the situation of the conflict, most approaches, techniques, and traditions discussed here very often overlap with the secular ones, and add to the pool of possibilities that can be used to resolve and end conflict.[2]

The Purpose of Conflict

Conflict is an integral part of life as Allah says, *"If thy Lord had so willed He could have made mankind one people, but they will not cease to dispute"* (Qur'an 11:118). As has been mentioned, man was endowed with free will and as a consequence can tend to one of two opposing states: the higher state of spirituality or the baser state of egotistical desires, or indeed anywhere along this spectrum. With this diversity in life purpose, differences are inevitable, especially when people enter into conflict for selfish and personal motives.[3] When referring to the first murder of Habil [Abel] by Qabil [Cain], the Qur'an states, *"So his lower self (nafs) persuaded him to kill his brother, and he killed him and became one of the lost"* (Qur'an 5:30). Thus when a person allows his lower self (*nafs*) to govern his actions, he is more likely to act unethically. This can be overcome by training the self to a higher and more moral state of being.

Allah's plan was to create difference among people, and as a consequence, difference of opinion and conflict will arise. Since there is always wisdom in this Divine plan, there must be some benefits that human beings can derive from situations of conflict. Moreover, it is through challenging and difficult times that a person's character becomes apparent. It is relatively easy, for example, to exercise the virtue of patience at times of ease. The truly patient person is the one who remains patient and grateful even through the toughest hardships. In this way, challenges and hardships (including situations of conflict) become opportunities to prove strength of character, to

2. Huda, 2010, p. xxv.
3. Ali, 1989, p. 542.

purify oneself from spiritual diseases of the heart and thus grow closer to Allah. In other words, it is means of divine testing as to the real strength and conviction of a person's faith. If a person can act in accordance with the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah, even in the face of provocation, then this is a means of reward from Allah. Not only is it considered a praiseworthy act to maintain one's dignity and composure when party to a conflict, it is also meritorious to make peace between two conflicting parties as a mediator.

When handled with etiquette by all parties, conflict can serve a number of purposes. Conflict can offer a forum in which all parties put forward their perspective. It then becomes an opportunity for others to open their mind to a different perspective, learn something, exchange ideas and grow in understanding and appreciation for another's point of view. It can also be a means to clear misunderstanding, reflect on one's own contribution to the conflicting situation and trigger change in future behaviour. Perhaps, most importantly, it should be the search for truth, clarity and justice. Conflict arises when the truth is hidden; when an injustice is done or when egotistical emotions mask the reality of a situation. Conflict resolution in Islam should work to uncover the truth, to champion justice and to clear away the web of tangled emotions that cloud our judgement. "This is how conflict resolution in Islam differs from other conflict resolution methods. Other methods will seek to resolve the conflict even if it means withholding or ignoring the truth of what happened."[4]

The Islamic Prescription for Peace and Conflict Resolution

Although volumes can be filled regarding what the Qur'an and hadith have espoused regarding human behaviour, social interactions and conflict resolution, we will look at the most important aspects, with no prioritisation intended. It may seem, at first glance, that some of these aspects are unrelated to the field of conflict resolution but Allah in His wisdom knows the nature of His creation and has given advice that is truly efficacious if applied correctly.

4. Toure, 2012.

• *The Five Pillars of Islam*

The basic precepts on which Islam rests are not simply rituals that one follows in order to be accepted into the fold of Islam; they are powerful acts of self-development and embody characteristics of inner and outer peace, when performed correctly. The five pillars are all centred around the individual's relationship with the Creator; this relationship is further strengthened when the Muslim shares such experiences with others.

In the case of *salah*, the ritual prayer, it is an opportunity to take time out from the pressures of life, connect with the Creator and feel part of something bigger. Problems shrink into perspective and the devotee becomes calmer and more humble with each prostration. There is a reward for every prayer completed individually but an even greater reward for performing that same prayer in congregation at the mosque in the company of other Muslims. Naturally, this encourages the Muslim to pray in congregation, and therefore this action works to strengthen community ties, share problems and build understanding. Another essential factor to peace is equality, and the prayer exemplifies just that. During the prayer, people of all backgrounds and different social statuses come together as one; they stand shoulder to shoulder and worship Allah, knowing that all are equal in His sight. Performed five times a day, every day for a lifetime, this is powerful method of achieving inner and outer peace.[5]

The *zakat*, or alms-giving, is an act of worship that, when done for the sake of Allah, brings pleasure to the heart of the giver, knowing that he or she has fulfilled an obligation decreed by Allah, and relief to the recipient of the financial help. But on a grander scale, this concept of sharing accumulated wealth on a regular basis protects Muslims from becoming too attached to material possessions and diminishes greed – one of the most common causes of conflict. Furthermore, a sense of community is fostered where the privileged feel responsibility to those in need, while the less fortunate have the reassurance that their needs will be catered for without resorting to means that are disruptive to society. This circulation of wealth contributes to an improvement in the socio-economic situation of

5. See Mawdudi, 1985, pp. 145-180.

a society, bridges the gap between the richest and poorest and is the key to establishing sustainable peace. The ever-widening disparity between the lowest and highest strata of society is something that many modern societies struggle with today and is the cause of a number of social ills.

The practice of *sawm*, fasting, is as old as human civilisation and offers a spiritual training that not only has countless health benefits, but also assists in spiritual development of the individual and the community. In the month of Ramadan, Muslims around the globe fast together, not only to fulfil a requirement of their faith, but also to stand in solidarity with the less fortunate. Far from being an exercise in abstinence, Muslims are encouraged to reach out to the community and assist them in their needs, give charity, forgive wrongs, perform extra prayers, and avoid sin, including backbiting, in the knowledge that any act of kindness and righteousness is greatly rewarded during this sacred month. Such a concerted and collective effort results in a remarkable change for the better in every community and leaves no room for grudges or conflict.

As for *Hajj*, it is *the* convention of inner and outer peace. It is an experience that millions of Muslims around the world long for, even if they have already performed it. Every year those who set out to observe Hajj are humbled by emotions and their hearts softened. From the moment they set foot from their homes, the heart of the pilgrim seeks only the pleasure of Allah, desiring to do the best for others, avoid any kind of indecency or causing harm to anyone or anything, not even an insect. The pilgrim starts by seeking the forgiveness of Allah and asking forgiveness of the people around them and with the purest of intentions make their way to Makkah in the *ihram*: two plain white unstitched sheets of white cloth. Here they stand before their Creator in praise, men and women, king and commoner, young and old, from each and every country in the world indistinguishable by their clothing. Mawdudi explains:

> Adopting such outward postures will influence your inner lives also. You will develop an ascetic attitude. Pride and vanity will disappear. Humility and peace of mind will grow. The impurities that have sullied your

> souls due to indulgence in worldly pleasure will be removed and a feeling of godliness will dominate both your internal and external selves.[6]

Unlike any other journey, Hajj is a journey of moral and spiritual regeneration. Muslims from all corners of the world, with different languages and ethnic backgrounds meet in one place, at the same time, for one purpose: to fulfil a religious obligation and worship one God in order to be purified and forgiven by Him. The scenes of Hajj are unrivalled. Millions of Muslims, in identical clothing, all practicing the same rituals at the same time, all praying to their Lord in the same language, all thinking the same thoughts, all carrying the same feelings, hopes and desires. Mawdudi quite rightly states that this is a blessing to humanity that cannot be found anywhere else, and that no one else has been able to devise "a better system than this for establishing peace in the world, for removing hostilities among nations and for creating...an atmosphere of love, friendship and brotherhood."[7]

Of course, the key to all of this, without which the other pillars would be meaningless, is the *shahadah*, testimony of faith. It is actually the shahadah, when embraced in totality, that opens the gates to a Muslim's path towards inner and outer peace that is then further developed by the other pillars of the faith.

• *Anger Management*

Anger in and of itself is not a negative emotion, but a part of human creation, as our flesh and limbs are, and without the feeling of anger there are many things we have today that would not have been possible to achieve, opposing an unjust act or an unjust ruler, for example.[8] Even the Prophet ﷺ himself told his followers, "I am a human being and I become angry like you."[9] Similar is the case with hatred; it too should not always be seen as a negative thing. Hating

6. Mawdudi, 1985, p. 265.
7. Ibid, pp. 275-277.
8. Yusuf in Mawlud, 2005, p. 102.
9. See Mawlud, 2005, pp. 101-112 for details.

corruption, killing, evil, stealing, and other such acts is something that should be encouraged for it is the emotion that accompanies such collective anger and hatred that can be the springboard for positive change in the world.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ explained that the origin of anger is Satan and that Satan is made from fire.[10] Like fire, anger has its benefits as long as it kept under control. And it is this that is the key – keeping it under control. Anger out of control is like "a swelling mass of emotion that is difficult to hold back once it is unleashed"[11] and leads a person to cause irreparable damage, physically and verbally. It is because of this potentially destructive quality that the Qur'an and hadith make special mention of anger:

> "*...the people who are God-fearing: those who give in times of both ease and hardship, those who control their rage and pardon other people...*" (Qur'an 3:133-134)

> "The best of you those that are slow to anger and swift to cool down...Beware of anger for it is a live coal on the heart of the descendants of Adam ﷺ."[12]

> "The strong man is not one who can wrestle people, but the man who controls himself when he is angry."[13]

> "Once a man asked Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to give him advice, and the Prophet ﷺ told him, 'Do not become angry.' This man repeated the same question again and got the same reply. For the third time the man asked, and the Prophet ﷺ said again, 'Do not become angry.'"[14]

It is said that this statement was repeated three times to stress the importance of such an act and that it carries the meaning of not allowing oneself to be overcome by anger.[15] Anger can also be

10. Hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawud*.
11. Yusuf in Mawlud, 2005, p. 101.
12. Hadith in *Jami at-Tirmidhi*.
13. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
14. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
15. Yusuf in Mawlud, 2005, p. 102.

compared to training a hunting dog – "without training, it will never retrieve what its owner needs, nor will it point the person in the right direction."[16]

Anger is the main challenge to the process of conflict resolution. It is in anger that many conflicts are initiated and it is through uncontrolled expressions of anger that conflicts escalate. On the other hand, unexpressed and suppressed anger is internalised but not dissipated or resolved. Thus following the Islamic advice to control anger (as opposed to allowing anger to control a person either as a seething internal rage or as a swelling of outward emotion) is of great benefit in the arena of conflict resolution.

For at least the past half a century, Muslims around the world have been portrayed as an angry people. The idea of a "Muslim rage" as Bernard Lewis once called it, is absurd, unfair and unacceptable because, as Edward Said pointed out, it is as if 1.5 billion people think the same way, and ignores the true dynamics and plurality of the Muslim world.[17] In any case, it has just been seen that the Qur'an and hadith teach and encourage quite the contrary.

• *Humility*

When Allah created Adam ﷺ, he asked the angels and Satan to bow down in prostration to the newly created human being. Satan refused to do so on the grounds that he thought that he was better than man.[18] On account of this, Allah expelled him from heaven. In response, Satan asked for a reprieve until the Day of Judgement and when this was given he said to Allah, *"By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. I will come at them from in front of them and behind them, from their left and from their right. You will not find most of them thankful"* (Qur'an 16:17).

In refusing to obey a command of Allah, Satan exhibited arrogance, jealousy and disobedience to His creator. In thinking himself to be better than man, Satan displayed egotism as well as

16. Ibid.
17. Said, 2001.
18. See Qur'an 7:11 onwards for the story of the creation of Adam ﷺ and the subsequent 'fall' and Satan's role in it.

committing the cardinal sin[19] of considering his viewpoint above Allah's. In his response to Allah, he levelled the false accusation that Allah misguided him and then showed defiance when he promised to lead human beings astray.[20] Thus we should be aware that Satan is the enemy of human beings.[21] His aim is to lead people astray by inciting arrogance, jealousy, rebellion and disobedience, egotism, falsehood and defiance both between people and between a person and his Creator, any or all of which lead to conflict and disharmony. The antidote to this is humility, which is considered a sublime facet of character: *"And the slaves of Allah are those who walk on the earth in humility..."* (Qur'an 25:63) and this is explained thus:

> *"Do not avert your face from people out of pride and do not strut about arrogantly on the earth. Allah does not love anyone who is vain or boastful. Be moderate in your walking and lower your voice. The most hateful of voices is the braying of the donkey."* (Qur'an 31:18-19)

In this short verse, there is a wealth of wisdom on human conduct. It espouses humility when meeting people and walking about, in the same way that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ always met people graciously and with a smile. It warns against being egotistical and boastful in speech as this could hurt people's feelings and finally it commands the lowering of the voice and speaking in tones that are not loud or harsh such as the "braying of the donkey". The Qur'anic verses about the slaves of Allah[22] continue:

> *"...and who, when the ignorant speak to them say, 'Peace!'"* (Qur'an 25:63)

> *"...and who, when they pass by worthless talk, pass by with dignity."* (Qur'an 25:73)

19. The cardinal sin of *shirk* (associating partners to God), which goes against the principle of *tawhid*, the Oneness of God.
20. Ali, 1989, pp. 347-348.
21. Murata & Chittick, 1994, p. 140.
22. See Qur'an 25:63-76 where Allah describes the special characteristics of those human beings who have found inner peace. See also Al-Bayoumi's *Slaves of the All-Merciful*, 2005.

Those who are humble are mindful of their speech and when they are addressed by people who wish to cause disharmony, they simply say "Peace" and do not engage in argument. Firstly, engaging with such people is not constructive because some people only wish to argue for arguments' sake and are of a disruptive nature. Secondly, it displays an absence of pride and egotism to allow a foolish person to make a worthless comment and let it pass rather than feeling injured and retaliating. The Prophet ﷺ further advised:

> "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day must either speak good or remain silent."[23]

He ﷺ also said:

> "I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for one who abandons arguments even if he is right, and a house in the middle of Paradise for one who abandons lies even when joking, and a house in the highest part of Paradise for one who makes his character excellent."[24]

When the quality of humility, as described above, is adopted in its broadest sense by one or both of the conflicting parties, it is impossible for any situation to escalate into a full conflict. This is why it is considered to be such a worthy quality to possess.

• *Forgiveness*

Forgiveness is a divine characteristic as four of the ninety-nine attributes of Allah are: *Al-Ghaffar* (The Forgiving), *Al-Ghafur* (The Forgiver and Hider of Faults), *At-Tawab* (The Acceptor of Repentance) and *Al-Afuw* (The Pardoner). So highly is forgiveness esteemed in Islam that Allah has mentioned it (and the derivatives of the word forgiveness) over 150 times in the Qur'an.[25] In order to

23. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
24. Hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawud*.
25. In the Qur'an the concept of forgiveness is expressed in three terms: 1) *'afu*, 2) *safhu*, and 3) *ghafara*. *The first meaning is "to pardon, to excuse for a fault or an offence..."; the second meaning is "to turn away from a sin or a misdeed..."; and the third meaning is "to cover, to forgive and to remit" (Ali, 2000).*

move closer to Allah, "Muslims understand that the compassion and forgiveness extended by God to humans must be mirrored as much as is humanly possible by their compassion and forgiveness to each other."[26] Indeed, the Qur'an repeatedly reminds people to be forgiving towards others:

> *"...whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace, his reward rests with God – for, verily, He does not love evildoers."* (Qur'an 42:40)

Also:

> *"Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant."* (Qur'an 7:199)

And:

> *"Verily the Hour is coming, so forgive them with gracious forgiveness."* (Qur'an 15:85)

This last verse instructs believers to forgive "graciously"; not begrudgingly or with a sense of self-satisfaction, but in the most generous and humble manner possible. This was exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ when he forgave the people of Makkah for thirteen years of persecution and then dealt with them as if nothing untoward had ever occurred. He also advised his followers:

> "Do not harbour grudges against one another, nor jealousy, nor enmity; and do not show your backs to one another; and become as fellow brothers and slaves of Allah. It is not lawful for a Muslim to avoid speaking with his brother beyond three days."[27]

He ﷺ also said:

> "Reconcile whoever cuts you off, give to whoever deprives you and pardon whoever wrongs you."[28]

26. Hayward, 2012*a*, pp. 5-6.
27. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.
28. Hadith in *Musnad Ahmad*.

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that it is possible to receive forgiveness from the True Creator alone by seeking sincere repentance for one's sins. The three pre-conditions of sincere repentance to be valid are: to feel remorse for the committed sin, remove the self from that sin and resolve not to commit such a sin again.[29] If the sin involves a wrong committed against another human being, the offender needs to put right whatever damage was caused to make amends to the person whose rights were infringed, as far as is practicable.[30]

According to the Shariah, a person has the right to retaliate against one who injures him physically: *"The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it"* (Qur'an 42:40). However, this is immediately followed by the counsel, *"But if someone pardons and puts things right, then his reward is with Allah"* (Qur'an 42:40). Thus forgiveness is recommended as a more worthy alternative than retribution.[31]

Allah places a great deal of emphasis on forgiveness in the Qur'an and this is supported in the teachings and example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. If practiced "graciously" as per the Qur'anic recommendation, then forgiveness in itself would put to an immediate end to conflict and all associated ill-feeling, open the doors to peace, which is preferred by the Creator, as observed in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Forgiveness, through the mercy of Allah, is known to heal the wounds of conflict and bring internal peace to both the forgiver and the forgiven.

• *Dealing with Others Kindly and with Gentleness*

Kindness and gentleness are at the heart of all matters in Islam, as the hadith explains: "Be kind, for whenever kindness becomes part of something, it beautifies it. Whenever it is taken from something, it leaves it tarnished."[32] This is reflected in the words of the Qur'an, which itself adopts a gentle tone when addressing its readers and advocates kindness and gentleness. Allah advised the prophets to be gentle in their speech and mannerisms and this is an ideology that

29. Al-Hanbali, Al-Jawziyya & Al-Ghazali, 1993, p. 152.
30. Ibid, p. 153.
31. Doi & Clarke, 2008, p. 342.
32. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

they themselves reflected in their personal conduct and teachings to their followers. For example, to the Prophets Musa [Moses] and Harun [Aaron] ﷺ, Allah instructed: *"Go both of you to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds. But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah)"* [Qur'an 20:43-44]. Even to the man who was the worst of tyrants, abused people, denied them their basic human rights and who believed himself to be 'god', Allah calls for mildness and respectful treatment.

At the Battle of Uhud, certain members of the Muslim army did not fully carry out the instructions of the Prophet ﷺ and this lead to a Muslim defeat. In the aftermath of the battle, Allah instructed the Prophet ﷺ in his dealings with those of his people:

> *"It is part of the mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Were thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee; so pass over their faults and ask for Allah's forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs of moment."* [Qur'an 3:159]

Allah also gives very specific instructions in the Qur'an regarding conduct to others, the most important being one's parents:

> *"Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him, and that you should show kindness to both your parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'Ugh!' to them out of irritation and do not be harsh with them but speak to them with gentleness and generosity."* [Qur'an 17:23]

To one's relatives:

> *"Allah commands justice and doing good and giving to relatives."* [Qur'an 16:90]

To others in society:

> *"Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him. Be good to your parents and relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to neighbours who*

> *are related to you and neighbours who are not related to you, and to companions and travellers and your slaves. Allah does not love anyone vain or boastful."* (Qur'an 4:36)

The Arabic word that appears in the Qur'an for "good" in the previous two verses is *Ihsan*, which was first mentioned in Part 2 of this book as being the pinnacle of Islamic ethics. The idea of doing "good" to people goes beyond the concept of repaying a kindness or doing good in return for good. It is to take the initiative of doing good, regardless of the conduct of the other party and not expecting any return for it.

• *Protecting Privacy and Covering Faults*

Those in the fields of healthcare, social services, counselling and so on are aware that the question of privacy and confidentiality is a very sensitive one and should be handled with the utmost delicacy. Even in this regard, the Qur'an sets the framework: *"Allah does not like evil words being voiced out loud, except in the case of someone who has been wronged"* (Qur'an 4:148). The commentary on this verse explains that it is forbidden to engage in idle sensation-mongering, malicious gossip and malevolent slander or libel. These activities, at best, hurt people's feelings and, at worst, deliberately cause harm to people's reputation and lives.[33]

When the Qur'an recounts events, it is very mindful of the issue of confidentiality. In the story of Prophet Yusuf [Joseph] ﷺ, for example, the Qur'an never reveals the name of the lady who tried to seduce the young Yusuf ﷺ. She is referred to as *ha* – the personal pronoun in the third person, meaning 'she'[34] – in order to protect her honour because later after the incident, she was remorseful over her actions. Furthermore, the Qur'an does not even mention the names of some of the staunchest enemies of Islam at the time Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ prophethood was

33. Ali, 1989, p. 232.
34. Aydin, 2001, pp. 34-35.

proclaimed.[35] There is a great wisdom in this, of course, because had their names been mentioned, these people would have not accepted Islam later on; it is part of human nature to resist the very thing that injures our pride, even if it is beneficial for us.[36] To this end, the Qur'an issues a very severe and lengthy warning against people who engage in gossip and backbiting[37] and likens this act to eating dead human flesh:

> *"You who believe! people should not ridicule others who may be better than themselves; nor should any women ridicule other women who may be better than themselves. And do not find fault with one another or insult each other with derogatory nicknames. How evil it is to have a name for evil conduct after coming to faith! Those people who do not turn from it are wrongdoers. You who believe! avoid most suspicion. Indeed some suspicion is a crime. And do not spy and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his dead brother's flesh! No you would hate it. And have taqwa of Allah. Allah is Ever-Returning, Most Merciful."* (Qur'an 49:11-12)

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ further elaborates in a hadith on what backbiting actually is: "Do you know what is meant by backbiting?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He ﷺ said, "To say something about your brother which he dislikes." One asked,

35. There is an enemy of Islam that the Qur'an specifically refers to but it is not by his real name, it refers to him by his nickname (Abu Lahab, translated as the Father of Fire). That is because such characteristics, as those of Abu Lahab, can be general and apply to people like him and people that do as he did because this man was known for his torturing of Muslims and attempts to annihilate Islam. Others have said the Qur'an refers to Abu Lahab specifically to make a point, and that is that this man was a relative of the Prophet ﷺ and he did not benefit from such a message and did not accept Islam; this serves as a warning to everyone who thinks that by being the relative of a Prophet ﷺ or someone good, they are automatically good too and will be saved as a result, but in Islam that is not the case. See Aydin, 2001, pp. 39-40.
36. Aydin, 2001, p. 35.
37. On this topic, see *The Backbiting* by Abdul Malik Al-Qasim.

"Even if what I say is true about my brother?" He ﷺ replied, "If such defects you say are true about him, then you have backbitten him, and if he doesn't have what you say, then you have committed slander against him."[38] In fact the Prophet ﷺ disliked that anyone one of his Companions should say anything about another to him: "None of my Companions should convey to me anything regarding another because I desire to meet every one of you with a clean heart."[39]

On the other hand, it is considered a virtue to hide the faults of a person in order to protect their honour and reputation, and on this note the Qur'an says: *"Kind words and covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury"* (Qur'an 2:263). The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also said in the same vein: "A servant does not cover the faults of another servant but that Allah will cover his faults on the Day of Resurrection."[40] These injunctions, when applied scrupulously, help to keep the hearts of everyone within a community free from suspicion and rancour and promote harmony. The person whose character may not be of the highest standard can be secure in the knowledge that his misdeeds have not been made public knowledge and this allows for the possibility of change and reformation.

• *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*

Unequivocally, the Qur'an and the hadith always command doing the right thing in the best manner possible. However, it is not enough for each individual to act in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. In order to make society safer and more harmonious, it is obligatory for every person to command each other to do right (*maroof*) and stay away from evil (*munkar*). "Peace and security are the goals of civilization, and Islam gives us the definite prescription for achieving that condition and making it a reality."[41] On this note, the Qur'an reminds:

> *"The believers, men and women, are protectors of one another; they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is*

38. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
39. Hadith in *Jami at-Tirmidhi*.
40. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
41. Emerick, 2004, p. 179.

> *evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them Allah will pour His mercy for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise."* (Qur'an 9:71)

A more detailed explanation is found in the hadith: "Whoever of you sees wrong being committed, let him rectify it with his hand, if he is unable, then with his tongue, and if he is unable, then with his heart, and this is the weakest of faith."[42] Commenting on this hadith, the thirteenth century scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah says:

> Enjoining right and forbidding wrong is done sometimes with the heart, sometimes with the tongue, and sometimes with the hand...As for practicing it with the heart, it is obligatory upon everyone in every time and situation, since its practice brings no hardship...[43]

And in the Islamic spirit of carrying out acts in the best manner possible, Ibn Taymiyyah continues: "Let your enjoining of good be good, and let not your forbidding of bad be bad."[44] In terms of conflict resolution, this has several implications. Those engaged in conflict have a responsibility to act correctly and within the bounds of the faith and enjoin the other party to act similarly. Those involved in mediation have a responsibility to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil to both parties on an equitable basis. On a national and international level, onlookers and bystanders have a responsibility to do what they are able to, given their circumstances and resources, to ensure that truth and justice are known, even if that is simply "practicing it with the heart". However, doing or feeling nothing in the face of dishonesty, injustice or corruption is simply not an option.

Practical Steps to Conflict Resolution and Peace Restoration

Conflict Resolution in the Qur'an is referred to by the word *islah*. The definition of *islah* is to mend, to restore something that is

42. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.
43. Ibn Taymiyyah, (nd), p.8.
44. Ibid, p. 7.

broken, to make something right, to make peace, to set something in order.[45] The term:

> appears several times in the Qur'an and which conveys the idea of improving, purifying, reconciling, repairing and reforming...The notion of *islah* implies bringing the object (whether a heart, an intelligence or a society) back to its original state, when the said object was considered to be pure and good: it is indeed a matter of improving, [or] curing, ...through reform.[46]

Present in the Qur'an is also the opposite of *islah*, which is *fasaad*, and it is defined as disorder, something corrupted and imbalanced. Regarding *fasaad*, the Qur'an says:

> *"Hence, do not spread corruption on earth after it has been so well ordered. And call unto Him [God] with fear and longing: verily, God's grace is ever near unto the doers of good!"* (Qur'an 7:56).[47]

Allah created the world in perfect balance in every way: scientifically, morally and with justice as He states in the Qur'an:

> *"He erected the heaven and established the balance, so that you would not transgress the balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance."* (Qur'an 55:7-8)

Humanity is advised not to disrupt the natural divinely set order by being just in all his dealings – with himself, with others and with Allah. When human beings act disruptively, as in the case of conflict, then the natural balance is upset and this is where the concept of *islah* is important in restoring that balance.

In addition to offering the advice outlined above regarding social conduct, the Qur'an and hadith also offer practical advice specific to conflict resolution.

45. Toure, 2012.
46. Sadek, 2009.
47. As translated by Imam Mamadou Toure.

• *Imposing a time limit on non-communication*

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "It is not permissible for a man to forsake his Muslim brother for more than three days, each of them turning away from the other when they meet. The better of them is the one who gives the greeting of *salaam* (peace) first."[48]

This hadith acknowledges that conflict will occur and it is natural when there is bad feeling between two people for them to create some distance between each other. However, the Prophet ﷺ put a maximum limit of three days on the silence between them for several reasons. Firstly, when a person harbours ill feeling in his heart against another person and then retreats from them, his mind can distort the truth and magnify the conflict thus increasing resentment and animosity over time. Secondly, if there is ill feeling between two people in a community, it creates an uncomfortable situation for the whole community and may divide loyalties, thus creating further divisions where there should be unity and brotherhood. Thirdly, it recognises that the best way to resolve conflict is actually to confront the person with whom the grievance is with and begin the process of communication. Direct and honest communication with the other party, no matter how uncomfortable it may be, is preferable to the alternatives of either backbiting or suppressing anger internally, neither of which are permissible in Islam. The more honourable person is the one who takes the first step to do this.

• *Etiquettes of Communication*

As has been seen earlier in this chapter, the Qur'an and hadith make repetitive mention of communicating with others in a lowered voice, with kindness and always with the truth. It is considered a sin to abuse one another as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "When two persons indulge in abusing each other, the beginner will be the sinner so long as the oppressed does not transgress the limits."[49] If one party finds themselves overcome with emotion that clouds the judgement, such as anger, then the prescription is also in the hadith: "If one of you is angry when he is standing, let him sit down so that

48. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.
49. Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.

the anger will leave him. Otherwise, let him lie down."[50] In other words, it is advisable to take a break when the argument becomes too heated to be constructive.

• *Allowing the conflicting parties to come to their own resolution in the first instance*
Although this Qur'anic advice is given to married couples, it is still applicable to other conflicting parties:

> *"There is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good and practice self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do."* (Qur'an 4:128)

It is best for both parties to come to their own resolution without involving a third party. This is because a solution that comes from mutual agreement between two persons can often be more sincere and longer-lasting than one imposed by a third party. The Qur'an again makes mention of the etiquette in coming to a solution, which is to put aside personal and egotistical considerations above the goal which is to achieve peace and truth, even if that requires personal sacrifice.

• *Mediation*
If two parties are unable to reach a resolution among themselves, then it is considered a meritorious act to mediate between them. *"If two parties of the believers fight, make peace between them"* (Qur'an 49:9). The verse goes onto to highlight the role of the mediator: *"But if one of them attacks the other unjustly, fight the attackers until they revert to Allah's command. If they revert, make peace between them with justice, and be even-handed. Allah loves those who are even-handed"* (Qur'an 49:9). Thus the role of the mediator demands that s/he is intimately aware of the laws of his or her Creator so that s/he can recognise when these have been transgressed and tactfully admonish the offending party. The mediator must deal justly and

50. Hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawud*.

equitably between both parties with the goal of achieving peace. As per Allah's advice in the Qur'an, s/he must deal with both parties gently and maintain confidentiality.

Usually secret conversations are not allowed in Islam because they are tantamount to backbiting. However, in three cases, secrecy is encouraged when it is for a higher motive and the Qur'an defines these as:

> *"There is no good in much of their secret talk except in the case of those who enjoin sadaqa [charity], or what is right, or putting things right between people. If anyone does that, seeking the pleasure of Allah, We will give him an immense reward."* (Qur'an 4:114)

Even in the presence of a mediator, the conflicting individuals are not absolved of their personal responsibility and can, indeed should, speak out even against themselves if true justice has not been carried out by the mediator. This can sometimes inadvertently be the case when one party presents their case in a more polished manner than the other party as the Prophet ﷺ himself advised: "You people present your cases to me and some of you may be more eloquent and persuasive in presenting their argument. So, if I give someone's right to another (wrongly) because of the latter's (tricky) presentation of the case, I am really giving him a piece of fire; so he should not take it."[51]

Perhaps because of the merit attached to mediating between two conflicting parties, Islamic peacebuilding efforts often rely on a third party to settle matters as Qamar-al Huda elucidates:

> Islamic efforts to create peace [often] use a religious judge (*qadi*) to rely upon established guidelines in Islamic law (*shari'ah*). The process of mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation (*sulh*) consist of the conflicting parties agreeing on a process of resolving a dispute with a third-party mediator, who will ensure that all parties are satisfied by the outcomes. In presenting evidence of the dispute (*bayyinah*), parties use witnesses and material

51. Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

> evidence to argue their perspective positions in the case. Other customary practices of dispute resolution (*'urf*) also include the use of third-party members to reconcile a dispute (*mukhtar*).

Furthermore, using an intermediary to represent a party in this process has been a common intervention practice in Islamic mediation, notes Huda, adding that this

> representative works toward a specific period of mediation (*hudna*), or truce. Conflicting parties find representatives, not necessarily lawyers, who can best present their position... the representatives then find a trusted third-party mediator who is committed to resolving the particular conflict and guarantee that the parties receive a fair settlement.[52]

• *Keeping a written record*

The Qur'an advises that written records are kept for financial agreements:

> *"O ye who believe! When ye deal with each other in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing...Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big: it is juster in the sight of Allah, more suitable as evidence and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves..."* (Qur'an 2:282)

However, it is prudent to extend this advice to all agreements between parties to prevent any misunderstanding at a later date. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself put some agreements in writing such as the memorable peace treaty of Hudaybiyyah.

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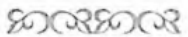
52. Huda, 2010, p. xix. For an account on Western approaches to peacebuilding, see *Practical Approaches to Peacebuilding: Putting Theory to Work* by Firchou & Anastasiou (Eds.)

This chapter has shown that absolutely every act prescribed by the Creator Himself in the life of a Muslim contributes directly or indirectly to inner peace of the self and a peace that permeates throughout society. Recognising that mankind is prone to be forgetful of his duties to Allah and to His creation, the Qur'an and hadith hold a wealth of advice that, when carried out with sincerity, will prevent situations of conflict from occurring and resolve most amicably those situations that do occur.

Chapter 9



Peacebuilding in the Modern Era

Religion, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Contrary to popular belief, religion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding do go hand-in-hand. Although most world religions teach and hold dear concepts such as peace, tolerance, acceptance and forgiveness, some followers of such religions have not lived up to those high standards and have violated these teachings for personal gains. These negative examples, however, should not cloud our judgements of entire religions and religious communities, as we see happening today in the case of Islam and Muslims. The truth of the matter is that most of the world religions embody in their doctrines a way of life that is committed to peace, understanding and the betterment of human life. Religion therefore can and should be used as a catalyst for conflict resolution, transformation and peace.[1]

Having said that, there have been claims that involving religion in the peacemaking process can be detrimental to the process itself. Researchers who have put these claims to the test, have concluded

1. For a detailed examination of this topic, see *Peace on Earth: The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict Studies* by Matyók, Flaherty, Tuso, Senehi & Byrne, 2015.

that there is viable demand for religion in the process of conflict resolution and peacemaking, and others have concluded that "faith, religion, spirituality, and values: (1) can have a safe place in the process; (2) need to be a subject of expertise for conflict resolvers; and (3) should be understood through the self-awareness work of being an ethical practitioner, regardless of their beliefs."[2] Most such faith-based peacemaking work has proven very effective,[3] since:

> Religious peacemaking involves forgiveness, reconciliation of pain, counseling, rehabilitation, recovery from trauma, public confessions, joint prayers, using narratives to create empathy, advocacy programs for victims, forums to explain misunderstandings, addressing the distorted image of the other in the faith tradition, and using the arts to express mutual respect. The bonds formed in interfaith peacemaking activities reveal an amazing level of openness to dialogue allowing participants greater freedom to reconstruct broken relationships, and damaged communities, reconcile conflicting parties, negotiate peace agreements, and create a common vision for peace.[4]

Regardless of current thought on the matter, many religious communities, "have long been engaged in building peace, justice and development themselves, and the emergence of the secular peacemaking field has led religious communities to systematize and institutionalize their own peacebuilding and interfaith work."[5] Such efforts have and continue to flourish everywhere the need arises, including the Balkans, Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and African countries like, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, and so on.[6] As the role of different faiths on peace, conflict resolution and peacebuilding is becoming more visible, and

2. Goldberg & Blancke, 2011, p. 377.
3. See, for instance, *The Imam and the Pastor*, 2006, DVD.
4. Huda, 2010, p. xvi.
5. Hayward, 2012*b*, p. 4.
6. See Abu-Nimer & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2008, pp. 549-581.

the number of religious peacebuilding initiatives is rapidly increasing, the field of religious peacebuilding itself is gaining momentum.[7]

It is very obvious that religion can and has played a great role in peacemaking, and it has, as Huda points out, "a role to play in promoting human rights, democracy, women's rights, and education ... providing relief to refugees and victims of natural disasters; working to reduce child labor, poverty, hunger, and disease."[8] The United Nations, for example, has already recognised the need to integrate religion in the peacemaking process and "to develop a strategic multilayered approach that included religious leaders in global peacemaking efforts."[9] Such initiatives would do well to be supported by other world organisations and governments given that most of the people in the world today belong to one religion or another, and it makes sense that their questions and problems are handled by professionals who understand their needs and points of view.

Although religious peacebuilding is being recognised, there is still work to be done, as such theories, practices and actors are not always accepted. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for instance, among others, "those involved in negotiations continue to marginalize religious actors from peace processes, seeing them as having no possible constructive role."[10] In the final analysis, the role of religion will always be questioned by individuals who are skeptical and retain their negative perceptions. So regardless of whether or not the field "is ready to bring God into the process [of conflict resolution], individual practitioners are, and many have been doing so for some time. For Native people," for instance, "you cannot leave God—the Great Spirit—off the table,"[11] and this most certainly applies to Muslims as well.

7. Hertog, 2010, p. xv.
8. Huda, 2010, p. 206.
9. Ibid, p. 205. See also Hayward, 2012*b*, pp. 3-4.
10. Comments by Michael Melchior. As qtd. in Hayward, 2012*b*, p. 8.
11. Goldberg & Blancke, 2011, p. 391.

Modern Initiatives

The comprehensive advice offered in the Qur'an and Sunnah is timeless and pure and it has been used as the basis for modern practical Islamic methods of conflict resolution. The need for these methods arises because certain problems are geographically specific; others are as a consequence of the modern technological age and yet others arise because of a misunderstanding between the boundaries of culture and religion. The Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, for example, has published the "Islamic Perspectives on Conflict Resolution: A Manual for Muslim Communities" entitled "...Say Peace!" This comprehensive manual outlines both Islamic and Western conflict resolution methods, case studies and practice exercises.[12]

Moreover, a number of outstanding individuals, notably women, are working tirelessly to achieve peace and resolve conflicts within their countries using Islamic principles tailored to local needs. To name just a few: Sakena Yacoobi, is the founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning, whose efforts are centred around rebuilding the country by educating women and children. The Afghan Institute of Learning continues to serve over 350,000 women and children "each year through its educational learning centers, schools and clinics, in both Afghanistan and Pakistan."[13] In South Thailand, Soraya Jamjuree, with her Friends of Victimized Families, has been working for years to bring peace and reconciliation between Muslims and Buddhists there. In 2005, Jamjuree and her team started the program in order to build healthy relationships between the families of the victims of conflict. Their aim has been to interrupt the cycle of revenge and hate between the two communities by bringing "together the women from both sides and reduce their pain" of their losses from the violence.[14] Her work is crucial in the healing and rapprochement process in the region. The same goes for the efforts of Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, a Muslim peacemaker from the Kenyan district of Wajri. So successful was her conflict resolution work in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan,

12. Abdalla et al., 2002.
13. Ibid, p. 193.
14. Ibid, pp. 195-196.

Uganda, and other parts of the world, that in 2007 she received the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the alternative Nobel Prize.[15] Another successful exemplar of peace today is Ibtisam Mahameed, a Palestinian peaceworker and member of the Jerusalem Peacemakers; she is also the founder of the Women's Interfaith Encounter.[16]

Throughout the West, there are numerous people making every effort within their localities to build bridges between different communities; promote interfaith dialogue, understanding and harmony; rallying for peace and human rights for all and speaking out against injustices and abuses whomever they are perpetrated by. It is the collective efforts of these individuals working at grass roots level that makes an immense difference to communities at large. A most worthy example would be Salma Ahmad from Portland, Oregon, who, among other things is a community leader and peacemaker, human rights activist, interfaith and community outreach representative, and president of the Islamic Society of Greater Portland.[17]

On an international level, peacebuilding methods have been used by Islamic Relief to deal with civil conflicts, such as Darfur back in 2002 which lead to the displacement of millions of people.[18] Similar efforts have been made by institutions like the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Nigeria. Since 1995, the centre "has focused on improving Muslim and Christian relations through workshops on dialogue, conflict prevention, conflict transformation, and mediation."[19] The Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (RIIFS), based in Jordan, has also applied such methods to foster "serious interdisciplinary research in the Arab world on religion, religious issues, interfaith studies, and cultural and civilizational studies" and has "held important peacebuilding workshops for Muslim and Christian religious leaders to increase cooperation and lessen tensions in the region."[20]

AMAN, the Asian Muslim Action Network, based in Thailand gathers Muslim scholars and peacemakers from Asian countries to

15. See The Right Livelihood, 2007.
16. See Global Oneness Project, 2006.
17. See Starke, 2010 in *The Oregonian*.
18. See Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2014.
19. Smock & Huda in USIP Special Report, 2009, p. 9.
20. Smock & Huda in USIP Special Report, 2009, p. 9.

focus on issues like "human rights, ethnic and religious intolerance, peace education, globalization, and youth leadership training," while also directing courses in training students in "alternative paradigms for peace, peacemaking, conflict assessment and prevention, conflict transformation, and research methodologies in peacebuilding studies."[21] In Lebanon, "the Imam M. M. Shamsuddin Foundation for Dialogue sponsors national dialogues on post-conflict healing, trains young religious leaders in dialogue, and supports interreligious collaboration."[22]

In 2007, the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan launched the famous 'A Common Word' initiative for interfaith engagement and cooperation and was endorsed by prominent religious scholars and clergy around the world. It started a new chapter for Muslim-Christian relations and opened the gates of ongoing dialogue by engaging and bringing the faith communities together for a more peaceful future.[23]

One extraordinary project that can easily be incorporated and implemented by many more institutions is Aceh's Peace Education Program in Indonesia. These efforts came about in response to the violence and armed struggles that took place in Indonesia's Aceh province. Tired of the conflict that had plagued their region for almost three decades, in 2000, a group of local academics, officials, and activists, working side-by-side with the Muslim scholars of the province, undertook the task of creating a peace education curriculum grounded in the core Islamic beliefs and rooted in local traditions and cultural values.[24] Although faced with numerous challenges such as lack of funding, the tsunami disaster of 2004, and the violence itself, the NGO's team (known in Indonesia as *Pendidikan Damai* or PPD) managed to produce and apply an unrivalled peace education curriculum that is used there to this day. The curriculum provides models of peacemaking and conflict resolution practices to high

21. Ibid.
22. See Smock & Huda, 2009, p. 9.
23. For more, see A Common Word initiative's page at http://www.acommonword.com/
24. Wells, 2002.

school students and their educators, based on local culture, history and religious traditions.[25] Worth mentioning here are the PPD's peace education manuals that teach concepts such as peace appreciation, tolerance, respect, justice, human rights, and democracy among other things, through the use of both Islamic texts and local indigenous traditions and proverbs. One such manual is being used as a peace education textbook in local schools.[26] The work of PPD has shown satisfying results and has proven to be very effective in addressing, understanding and keeping in check the conflict in point.[27]

One reason for the effectiveness of the PPD curriculum is that it uses a holistic approach to peace and an understanding that peace can only be achieved, not just when an individual is at peace with the Creator, but also when individuals achieve peace with each other by removing inequalities and injustices. Leah Wells, Peace Education Coordinator from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, comments, "Islam teaches that peace is not a receptive, passive condition where only self-interests are served. Rather peace is a dynamic which must be continually refined, redefined and struggled to achieve." Further adding that:

> The peace paradigm this curriculum espouses is one where Allah encompasses the realms of peace within, peace in the community, and peace with nature. The Aceh peace education curriculum teaches that in Islam, nature is meant to serve our needs not our wants. Therefore, to have peace with Allah and peace between human beings, we must also respect the peace that exists in nature and not take advantage of natural resources which bring great wealth to a few and great poverty to many. It is the economic injustices that are perpetrated at a structural level which cause tremendous personal violence on an individual level.[28]

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25. Smock & Huda, 2009, p. 8.
26. See Husin, 2010, pp. 151-177.
27. Ibid. See a copy of the Peace Education Curriculum manual here: www.creducation.org/resources/Aceh_Peace_Ed_Curriculum_Indonesian.pdf
28. Wells, 2002.

Chapter 10

A Faith Committed to Peace

As the name Islam itself denotes, the religion is concerned with the establishment of peace, in every sense of the term, and the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and hadith, are unequivocal about this. In fact the five pillars that form the basis of Islam confirm the same. The *Shahadah* [declaration of faith], *salah* [prayer], *zakat* [alms-giving], *sawm* [fasting] and *hajj* [pilgrimage] are all centred on the individual's relationship with Allah, while fulfilling the rights of fellow human beings. They are a means of self-development and keeping the ego in check. If practiced sincerely, these are meant to serve as a way of achieving peace – peace within oneself, peace with creation and with the Creator, as Abu-Nimer states:

> Peace in Islam is a state of physical, mental, spiritual and social harmony. Living at peace with God through submission, and living at peace with fellow beings by avoiding mischief on earth, is real Islam. Islam is a religion that preaches and obligates its believers to seek peace in all life's domains. The ultimate purpose of one's

existence is to live in a peaceful as well as a just social reality.[1]

The Qur'an repeatedly calls upon Muslims to practice and promote peace in thoughts, words, manners and actions. Verse upon verse offers detailed instructions on fulfilling the rights of others, on treating people with kindness, on "gracious" forgiveness and humility, on the importance of excellence in speech and personal behaviour in private and public. In short, the Qur'an contains everything a person needs to know in order to be Allah's vicegerent on earth and discharge his/her responsibility as caretaker of Allah's creation in the most harmonious way possible. If the advice therein is followed with excellence (*Ihsan*), man can fulfil his potential and live according to his primordial nature (*fitrah*).

However, human beings are also inclined to forget the higher purpose of their creation and succumb to fulfilling their base desires. This is when, according to Islamic thought, the heart becomes diseased and there is disruption to the individual's inner peace as well as an imbalance in society, which leads to conflict. Recognising that conflict is an essential part of life and indeed a means of self-development, the Qur'an, hadith and Shariah also outline the means to avert it and/or resolve it in the most beneficial way to the conflicting parties as well as society, with practical advice on time scales for conflict resolution and anger management to name but two. The concept of *islah* or mediation is introduced in the Qur'an as a praiseworthy duty, with specific advice given to mediators and arbiters to ensure that truth and justice are upheld.

Justice is an essential component of a peaceful society and Islam recognises that without justice, a state of peace cannot be achieved. So when there is a threat to peace and an infringement of basic human rights, Allah has allowed Muslims the right to defend themselves and their freedom to worship and to fight against injustice. This is a temporary measure put in place with the aim of restoring peace in the long term. The Qur'an has also laid down an extremely well-defined

1. Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 243.

framework that defines the circumstances in which self-defence can be exercised and the strict code of conduct that must be followed.

In fact, so central is the Qur'an in the life of a Muslim, that it is not only a book of faith but also a book of guidance. Known also as *Al-Furqan* (the Criterion), it is the guide that distinguishes right from wrong. As such, the Qur'an should be approached as a book that holds the solution to all of humanity's problems: a timeless manual for peace and conflict resolution. It is to be referred to in all matters of life, not just the religious as the Qur'an itself states:

> *"Should you have a dispute in anything, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. This course of action will be better and more suitable."* (Qur'an 4:59)[2]

Referring the matter to Allah in this case means referring to the Qur'an for the most suitable solution, while referring it to His Messenger, Muhammad ﷺ, is interpreted to mean referring matters to him while he was alive and to his Sunnah after his passing away.[3] This knowledge can only be attained and understood if a Muslim develops a close relationship with the Qur'an by reading and studying it with love and conviction and putting the words into practice to the best of his/her ability. When this is achieved, then "the Qur'an will have its desired effect on him, in the same way that it had its desired effect upon the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ."[4] This Qur'anic effect has created a number of great and praiseworthy generations and societies throughout Islamic history and has the potential to do so again.

The process of constructing such a society initially begins with the achievement of inner peace which then radiates outer peace into society at large. The initial revelations from Allah set the framework and laid down the guidelines of the faith, including belief in the Oneness of God, the Hereafter, the prior prophets and their scriptures, the unseen, the five pillars of Islam with the aim of achieving inner

2. Malik's translation.
3. Zarabozo, 1999, p. 31.
4. Ibid, pp. 32-33.

peace.[5] It was then, once that inner peace had been achieved through belief and actions, as prescribed in Islam, that the Prophet ﷺ began spreading his message to more and more people and constructing a society based on values of peace, tolerance and understanding that culminated in the beautiful community in Madinah after twenty-three years. This was a dynamic community of varied backgrounds and social status and religions that lived in complete harmony governed by mutual love and respect, a sense of unity, equality, sanctity for all life, accountability, patience, forgiveness, service to others, humility.

And the most perfect embodiment of all of these qualities was the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. As a person, he had the most gentle, humble, honest and generous character free of all egotism. As the leader of a growing community in a hostile environment, he was the perfect example of how to deal with enemies graciously and in the best way according to the circumstances at hand. He practised nonviolence in the face of horrific persecution for thirteen years because that was the best means for keeping the peace. However, for the final eight years of his life when he needed to fight for justice and peace against the enemies who would have annihilated him and the message of Islam, he did so with exemplary conduct on the battlefield. The number of times that he engaged in actual fighting, the combatant casualties (there were no civilian casualties), the treatment of the prisoners of war and the peace treaties that he entered into are all testament to a man that valued the pursuit of peace above all else. He ﷺ left a shining example to others, leaders and commoners, of what it is to suffer and yet to forgive, to be ridiculed and yet to be patient, to be victorious and yet be humble, to be offered the riches of the world and yet shun them for principles. It is in this example from the past that the key to the future can be found, as Karen Armstrong wrote:

> If we are to avoid a catastrophe, the Muslim and the Western worlds must learn not merely to tolerate but to

5. As the Qur'an states, *"for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction"* (Qur'an 13:28).

appreciate one another. A good place to start is with the figure of Muhammad: a complex man, who resists facile, ideologically driven categorization, who sometimes did things that were difficult or impossible for us to accept, but who had profound genius and founded a religion and cultural tradition that was not based on the sword but whose name – "Islam" – signified peace and reconciliation.[6]

6. Armstrong, 2006*a*, p. 202.

Chapter 11

Reflections, Conclusions and Recommendations

We know from history that very often religions have been used, and abused, one way or another to meet personal interests and political agendas. Because of this, wars have been fought and millions have been killed. There has been much unnecessary blood shed by people who believe that they are working for a divine cause. However, as we know from the teachings and practices of the various religious traditions, none of that is part of the religious experience. As has often been said, violence and terrorism have no religion. Anyone can easily claim to be a follower of faith and act in the name of it, but that does not mean their religion sanctions their actions. People and movements that have and are committing atrocities in the world today are doing just that: using a particular religion to execute personal agendas. As far as Islam is concerned, the purpose of this book has been to show that nowhere in the teachings of Islam, has the killing of innocents been sanctioned.

Contrary to anti-religious rhetoric, the truth of the matter is that most of the world religions embody in their doctrines a way of life that is committed to peace, understanding and the betterment of human life. And since most of the world's population identify with

one religion or another, religion, therefore, can and should be used as a catalyst for conflict resolution and peace. As this realisation is dawning, the role of religion in peace, conflict resolution and peacebuilding is becoming more visible, and the number of religious peacebuilding initiatives is rapidly increasing and gaining momentum.

With specific reference to Islam, as is the thrust of this book, it is a religion of balance and as its sources indicate, it can make great contributions to the field of conflict resolution and peacemaking. Such sources should be closely examined, studied and applied by Muslims and even qualified non-Muslim practitioners when it comes to resolving conflict and making peace. On this point Abu-Nimer notes:

> Educating both Muslims and non-Muslims on the peaceful message of Islam and eradicating the ignorance that leads to the negative stereotyping of Islam and to enmity between Muslims and non-Muslims is the first step toward peaceful and just relations between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. However, such efforts are not enough. Peacebuilders and agents of social change in Muslim communities have also to face the structural obstacles that exist in Muslim communities. Although such social, cultural, and political obstacles are often maintained by external forces, individuals and organizations can resist this decay and these evil forces.[1]

In order to achieve such valued objectives, Abu-Nimer adds that, every Muslim community should resort to self-examination and also critically examine the role it may be playing in perpetuating today's reality which is often one of stagnation, and even a sense of helplessness present in many Muslim communities, unfortunately.

Furthermore, Islam and Muslims play a great part in the global discourse, with Muslims living in all corners of the world. Blaming Islam and vilifying Muslims will do nothing to abate the irrational fear many right-wing Westerners have about Islam and Muslims.

1. As qtd. in USIP Special Report, 2002, p. 6.

Obviously, the way forward together as a human race is not to alienate the Muslim populations in the West, nor cut ties with those in the East. Nor is the answer in banning them from entering Western countries, for example, putting their places of worship under surveillance, physically attacking them,[2] as has often been the case,[3] or registering them on a national database for easy tracking, as one American politician called for.[4] Political moves like these, of course, are short lived, but what is disturbing is that they are no different than those of Nazi Germany against the Jewish people. Such hatred and intolerance are naturally destabilising for any society. As former United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook, once noted:

> When governments crack down on religious expression, when politicians or public figures try to use religion as a wedge issue, or when they fail to denounce religious bigotry and curb discrimination based on religious identity, they embolden extremists and fuel sectarian strife. It therefore is our core conviction that religious freedom and respect for religious diversity is an essential element of a peaceful society. And it's an element of successful democracy as well, because people who see that their rights and dignity are respected are more likely to have a stake in the success of their country and their society.[5]

Bigoted rhetoric and attacks on Muslims, or any other religious group for that matter, play right into the hands of extremist groups and their Western counterparts who desperately want to establish the idea that there is in fact a clash of civilisations. This implies that the West is essentially at war with Islam and that the two sides cannot

2. See Lichtblau, 2015 in *The New York Times*, showing that hate crimes against Muslims have tripled across the United States, especially after the Paris attacks and the San Bernardino shootings of 2015.
3. See Dean, 2015 in the *IBTimes*. See also Gani, 2015 in *The Guardian*, showing how the targeting of Muslims tripled in London after the Paris attacks of November, 2015.
4. Davidson, 2015 in *The New Yorker*.
5. As qtd. in Hayward, 2012*b*, p. 3.

coexist in the modern world, forgetting that these civilisations have lived side by side peacefully, more or less, ever since their inception. The way forward, collectively and individually, is to cultivate adequate and appropriate education of 'the other' and an array of other peacebuilding components such as relationship building through improvement of communication, reconstructing broken relationships, increasing transparency, and fostering understanding, acceptance and respect of each other's traditions; to encourage resolution of differences through dialogue and peaceful means using shared values; and to engage in collaborative work for mutually beneficial causes such as promotion of human rights, alleviating poverty and ending diseases, security and peace, environmental issues, women's rights, and so on.

Most importantly, the key to all of this is for neighbouring civilisations to come together, in whatever form or setting, and dialogue, as they often have done throughout the centuries.[6] When people talk, the world becomes a different place. It becomes a place of mutual respect, compassion and care; something it currently lacks and longs for.

Even so, there are many factors today that oppose dialogue between *and* within civilisations, and while these various factors seem to be making progress difficult at times, they are challenges that humanity can and must overcome. Certainly, when it comes to civilisational dialogue and understanding, Muslims should be invited to the table and consulted. Knowing that at the heart of the teachings of Islam are compassion, justice, tolerance, respect, equality, the sacredness of human life, coexistence, and peace, among other things, it should show us that Muslims have a great deal to offer these civilisational exchanges, which can ultimately bring about a better world for us and future generations. To conclude, Seyyed Nasr noted on this point:

> Islam is the last major religion of this cycle of human history, and the Qur'an speaks explicitly of the veracity of religions sent to mankind before Islam. As for Islamic civilization occupying the middle belt of the world, by

6. See for example de Terán's 'The Andalusian Model of Muslim Christian Dialogue Today' and other articles in *Islam and the West: A Civilized Dialogue* by ECSSR.

> geography as well as by its historical experience, it is suited in every way to carry out civilizational dialogue with various civilizations and to be itself a bridge between East and West, reflecting the light of that blessed olive tree to which the Qur'an refers as being neither of the East nor of the West, as it is also the message of surrender to the Lord Who is the Lord of all the Easts and all the Wests.[7]

7. Nasr, 2004*a* in *The American Muslim* (TAM).

A Prayer for Peace

"O Allah, join our hearts, mend our social relationships, guide us to the path of peace, bring us from darkness to light, save us from obscenities, outward or inward,and bless our ears, our eyes, our hearts, our wives, our children, and relent toward us; Thou art the Relenting, the Merciful. And make us grateful for Thy blessing and make us praise it while accepting it and give it to us in full."[1]

1. *Sunan Abu Dawud*. This particular hadith is found in the book of prayer for rain.

Appendix A
The Farewell Sermon of the Prophet[1]

At Mount Arafat, during the pilgrimage of 632 CE, on the ninth day of *Dhul Hijjah* (the 12th month of the lunar year), in the presence of thousands of his followers, the Prophet ﷺ delivered his last sermon as follows:

> O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity. Allah has judged that there shall be no interest, and that all the interest

1. Referenced in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Jami at-Tirmithi* and *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*. For a detailed account, see Ibn Ishaq's *The Life of Muhammad*, 2004, pp. 449-452.

due to Al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib[2] shall henceforth be waived...

Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small matters.

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under a trust from Allah and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste.

O People, listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, perform your five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan, and offer Zakat. Perform Hajj if you have the means.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white; [none have superiority over another] except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

2. Al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib was a cousin of the Prophet ﷺ and his follower, who in this case had loaned money to people in need.

> O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me, and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O people, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah, and if you follow these you will never go astray.
>
> All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and it may be that the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people."

After the Prophet ﷺ delivered his speech, the Qur'anic revelation came down to him, which he conveyed in the following words:

> *"...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My Grace upon you, and have chosen Islam for you as your religion..."* (Qur'an 5:3)

Appendix B
The Constitution of Madinah (The Madinah Charter) (622 CE)[3]

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Article 1: Constitutional Document

This is a constitutional document given by Muhammad ﷺ, the prophet, (Messenger of Allah).

Article 2: Constitutional Subjects of the State

(This shall be a pact) between the Muslims of Quraysh, the people of Yathrib (the Citizens of Madinah), and those who shall follow them and become attached to them (politically) and fight along with them (if necessary). (All these communities shall be the constitutional subjects of the state.)

3. The following text, slightly modified (after having been cross-referenced with other translations) is an excerpt from Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's *The Constitution of Medina*, Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2012. The italicised terms like *Banu Awf*, *Banu Harith*, and so on, refer to the names of the tribes in Madinah, and its surrounding areas.

Article 3: Formation of the Constitutional Nationality

The aforementioned communities shall formulate a Constitutional Unity as distinct from (other) people.

Article 4: Validation and enforcement of the former tribal laws of blood money for the emigrant Quraysh

The emigrants from Quraysh shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 5: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Awf*

And the emigrants from *Banu Awf* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 6: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Harith*

And the emigrants from *Banu Harith* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 7: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Saida*

And the emigrants from *Banu Saida* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 8: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Jusham*

And the emigrants from *Banu Jusham* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 9: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Najjar*

And the emigrants from *Banu Najjar* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 10: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Amr*

And the emigrants from *Banu Amr* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 11: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Nabeet*

And the emigrants from *Banu Nabeet* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover, the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 12: Validation of the former laws of blood money for *Banu Aws*

And the emigrants from *Banu Aws* shall be responsible for their ward and they shall, according to their former approved practice, jointly pay the blood money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of their prisoners by paying the ransom. Moreover,

the deal among the believers shall be in accordance with the recognised principles of law and justice.

Article 13: Indiscriminate rule of law and justice for all the communities

And every group shall secure the release of its captives ensuring that an indiscriminate rule of law and justice is applied among the believers.

Article 14: Prohibition of relaxation in execution of law

The believers shall not leave a debtor among them, but shall help him in paying his ransom, according to what shall be considered fair.

Article 15: Prohibition of unjust favouritism

A believer shall not form an alliance with the associate of (another) believer without the (latter's) consent.

Article 16: Collective resistance against injustice, tyranny and mischief

There shall be collective resistance by the believers against any individual who rises in rebellion, attempts to acquire anything by force, violates any pledge or attempts to spread mischief amongst the believers. Such collective resistance against the perpetrator shall occur even if he is the son of anyone of them.

Article 17: Prohibition of killing of a Muslim by a Muslim

A believer shall not kill (another) believer (in retaliation) for an unbeliever, nor help an unbeliever against a believer.

Article 18: Guarantee of equal right of life protection for all the Muslims

The security of Allah (granted under this constitution) is one. This protection can be granted even by the humblest of the believers (that would be equally binding for all).

Article 19: Distinctive identity of the Muslims against other constitutional communities

The believers shall be the associates of one another in face of all other people (of the world).

Article 20: Non-Muslim minorities (Jews) have the same right of life protection (like Muslims)

A Jew, who obeys us (the state) shall enjoys the same right of life protection (as the believers do), so long as they (the believers) are not wronged by him (the Jews), and he does not help (others) against them.

Article 21: Guarantee of peace and security for all the Muslims based on equality and justice

And verily the peace granted by the believers shall be one. If there is any war in the way of Allah, no believers shall make any treaty of peace (with the enemy) apart from other believers, unless that is based on equality and fairness among all.

Article 22: Law of relief for war allies

Every war ally of ours shall receive relief turns (at riding) at all military duties.

Article 23: Law of vengeance for the Muslims in case of bloodshed in the way of Allah

The believers shall execute vengeance for one another for the bloodshed in the way of Allah.

Article 24: Islam is the best code of life

All the Allah-fearing believers are under the best and most correct guidance of Islam.

Article 25: Prohibition of providing security of life and property to the enemy

No idolater (or any non-believer among the clans of Madinah) shall give protection for property and life to (any of the) Quraysh (because of their being hostile to the state of Madinah) nor shall he intervene on his behalf against any believer.

Article 26: Execution of the law of retaliation for a Muslim murder

When anyone intentionally kills a believer, the evidence being clear he shall be killed in retaliation, unless the heirs of the victim are satisfied with the blood money. All the believers shall solidly stand against the murderer and nothing will be lawful for them except opposing him.

Article 27: Protection or concession for the doer of mischief and subversion against the constitution

A believer who believes in Allah and in the Hereafter and agrees to the contents of this document shall not provide any protection or concession to those who engage in mischief and subversion against this constitution. Those who do so shall face the curse and wrath of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. Furthermore, nothing shall be accepted from them as a compensation or restitution (in the life hereafter).

Article 28: The final and absolute authority in the disputes vests in Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

When anyone among you differs about anything, the dispute shall be referred to Almighty Allah and to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, (as all final and absolute authority is vested in them).

Article 29: Proportionate liability of non-Muslim citizens (the Jews) in bearing the war expenses

The Jews (non-Muslim minorities) will be subjected to a proportionate liability of the war expenses along with the believers so long as they (the Jews) continue to fight in conjunction with them.

Article 30: Guarantee of freedom of religion for both the Muslims and non-Muslim minorities (the Jews)

The Jews of *Banu Awf* (non-Muslim minorities) shall be considered a community along with the believers. They shall be guaranteed the right of religious freedom along with the Muslims. The right shall be conferred on their associates as well as themselves except those who are guilty of oppression or the violators of treaties. They will bring evil only on themselves and their family.

Article 31: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Najjar* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*

The Jews of *Banu Najjar* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf*.

Article 32: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Harith* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
The Jews of *Banu Harith* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf*.

Article 33: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Saida* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
The Jews of *Banu Saida* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf*.

Article 34: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Jusham* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
The Jews of *Banu Jusham* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf*.

Article 35: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Aws* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
The Jews of *Banu Aws* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf*.

Article 36: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Tha'laba* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
The Jews of *Banu Tha'laba* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf* except who are guilty of oppression or violate treaties, they will bring evil only on themselves and their family.

Article 37: Equality of rights for *Jafna*, the branch of *Banu Tha'laba*, with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
Jafna, a branch of *Banu Thalaba*, shall enjoy the same rights as granted to *Banu Tha'laba*.

Article 38: Equality of rights for the Jews of *Banu Shutayba* with the Jews of *Banu Awf*
The Jews of *Banu Shutayba* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to the Jews of *Banu Awf*. There shall be complete compliance (with this constitution) and no violation (of its clauses).

Article 39: Equality of rights for all the associates of the tribe of *Banu Tha'laba*
All the associates of *Banu Tha'laba* shall enjoy the same rights as granted to *Banu Thalaba*.

Article 40: Equality of rights for all branches of the Jews
All sub-branches of the Jews shall enjoy the same rights as granted to them (the Jews).

Article 41: Final command and authority in military expeditions vests in the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
Verily, none among the allies shall advance (on a military expedition) without the prior permission of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, (in whom vests the final command and authority).

Article 42: No exception from the law of retaliation
There shall be no impediment on anyone who wished to avenge a wound.

Article 43: Responsibility of unlawful killing
Whoever commits an unlawful killing shall be responsible for it himself with his family members but he is exempted in case he kills a cruel. Verily, Allah (is the Trusted Helper) supports those who adhere completely to this constitution.

Article 44: Separate liability of war expenses
The Jews and the Muslims shall bear their own war expenses separately.

Article 45: Compulsory mutual help to one another in case of war
There shall be mutual help between one another against those engage in war with the allies of this document.

Article 46: Mutual consultation and honourable dealing
There shall be mutual consultation and honourable dealing between the allies and there shall be the fulfilment, not the violation, of all pledges.

Article 47: Law of prohibition of treachery and help of the oppressed
No one shall violate the pledge due to his ally and verily help shall be given to the oppressed.

Article 48: The Jews (non-Muslim minorities) shall also extend financial support to the state during the war period

The Jews (non-Muslim minorities) along with the believers shall extend financial support to the state during the war period.

Article 49: Prohibition of fighting and bloodshed among the various communities of the state

The valley of Yathrib is sacred and there shall be prohibition of fighting and bloodshed among the various communities of the state.

Article 50: Equal right of life protection shall be granted to everyone, who has been given the constitutional shelter

A person given constitutional shelter shall be granted an equal right of life protection as long as he commits no harm and does not act treacherously.

Article 51: Law of shelter for the women

A woman shall not be given any shelter without the consent of her family.

Article 52: Authority of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shall be final and absolute in all disputes instigating any quarrel

And verily if any dispute arises among the parties to this document from which any quarrel may be feared, it shall be referred to Allah and to Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah, for the final and absolute decision. Verily, Allah is the Guarantee for the faithful observance of the contents of this constitution (which shall be enforced by the state).

Article 53: No refuge for the enemies of the state nor for their allies

There shall be no refuge for the Quraysh (the enemies of the state) nor for their allies.

Article 54: Joint responsibility of defence in case of an attack on the state

The Muslims and the Jews shall be jointly responsible to defend (the state of) Madinah against any outside attack.

Article 55: Incumbency of observance of the treaty of peace for every ally

It shall be incumbent upon the Jews to observe and adhere to any peace treaty they are invited to participate in. Likewise, it shall also be incumbent upon the Muslims to observe and adhere to any peace treaty they are invited to.

Article 56: No treaty shall suspend or negate the responsibility of the protection of the *Deen*

(Likewise, it shall be incumbent upon the Muslims also to observe and adhere to any peace treaty that they are invited to), but no treaty will restrain them from fighting for the protection of their faith.

Article 57: Every party to treaty shall be responsible for the defence of its facing direction

Every party to the treaty shall be responsible for the measures and arrangements of the defence of its facing direction.

Article 58: The basic constituent members of this document and their associates shall possess equal constitutional status

The Jews of *Aws* (one of the basic constituent members of this document) and their allies shall posses the same constitutional status as the other parties to this document, with a condition that they should be thoroughly sincere and honest in their dealing with the parties.

Article 59: No party shall have any right of violation of the constitution

No party shall have the right to violate the constitution. Every person who is guilty of a crime shall be held responsible for his act alone.

Article 60: Favour of Almighty Allah will be subject to the observance of the constitution

Verily, Allah is the Guarantee for the faithful observance of the contents of this constitution (which shall be enforced by the state).

Article 61: No traitor or oppressor shall have the right of protection under this document

Verily, this constitutional document shall not protect any traitor or oppressor.

Article 62: All peaceful citizens shall be under safe and secure protection
Verily, whoever goes out (on a military expedition) shall be provided with security and whoever stays in Madinah shall have (likewise), except those who commit oppression and violate the contents of this constitution.

Article 63: Allah and his Prophet Muhammad ﷺ are the protectors of the peaceful citizens of Madinah who abide by the constitution
Verily, Allah and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah, are the protectors of good citizens and of those who fear Allah.

Appendix C
The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah (628 CE)[4]

In your name, O God! This is the treaty of peace between Muhammad ibn Abdullah and Suhayl ibn Amr.

1. Make things easy and do not make them hard, and cheer people up and do not rebuff them.
2. The Muslims shall return this time and come back next year, but they shall not stay in Makkah for more than three days.
3. They shall not come back armed but can bring with them swords only sheathed in scabbards and these shall be kept in bags.
4. War activities shall be suspended for ten years, during which both parties will live in full security and neither will raise sword against the other.

4. As qtd. in *The Sealed Nectar* by Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002, pp. 403-404.

5. If anyone from Quraysh goes over to Muhammad without his guardian's permission, he should be sent back to Quraysh, but should any of Muhammad's followers return to Quraysh, he shall not be sent back.

6. Whosoever wishes to join Muhammad, or enter into treaty with him, should have the liberty to do so; and likewise whosoever wishes to join Quraysh, or enter into treaty with them, should be allowed to do so.

Appendix D
The Agreement of Umar with the People of the Surrendered City of Jerusalem (638 CE)[5]

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

This is the assurance of safety (*aman*) which the worshipper of Allah (the second caliph) 'Umar [ibn al-Khattab], the Commander of the Faithful, has granted to the people of Aelia.[6] He has granted them an assurance of safety for their lives and possessions, their churches and crosses; the sick and the healthy (to everyone without exception); and for the rest of its religious communities. Their churches will not be inhabited (taken over) nor destroyed (by Muslims). Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their possessions will be encroached upon or partly seized. The people will not be compelled (*yukrah'na*) in religion, nor any one of them be maltreated (*yadarr'na*). The people of Aelia must pay the *jizyah* tax like the Ahl al-Mada'in (the people of the [other] region/cities), they

5. From Abu-Munshar, 2006, p. 69.
6. Aclia was the Roman name of Jerusalem.

must expel the Byzantines and the robbers. As for those (the first Byzantine group) who will leave (Aelia), their lives and possessions shall be safeguarded until they reach their place of safety, and as for those (the second Byzantine group) who (choose to) remain, they will be safe. They will have to pay tax like the people of Aelia. Those people of Aelia who would like to leave with the Byzantines, take their possessions, and abandon their churches and crosses will be safe until they reach their place of safety.

Whosoever was in Aelia from the people of the land (*ahl al-ard*) (e.g., refugees from the villages who sought refuge in Aelia) before the murder of *fulan* (name of a person) may remain in Aelia if they wish, but they must pay tax like the people of Aelia. Those who wish may go with the Byzantines, and those who wish may return to their families. Nothing will be taken from them until their harvest has been reaped. The contents of this assurance of safety are under the covenant of Allah, are the responsibilities of His Prophet ﷺ, of the caliphs, and of the faithful if (the people of Aelia) pay the tax according to their obligations. The persons who attest to it are Khalid ibn al-Walid, 'Amr ibn al-'As, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf, and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. This assurance of safety was written and prepared in the year 15 (AH).

Appendix E
Quick Tips for Conflict Resolvers and Mediators

Depending on the setting and the situation where conflict arises, and also depending on your role in the process, the following points that have been collected and adapted from various sources may prove useful:[7]

- Breathe naturally and *stay calm* (as much as possible). At the same time, *stay alert* and *be prepared* since conflict can quickly emerge and escalate.
- When and if possible, try to establish some basic ground rules such as respect for each other (the parties involved), tone of voice, equal time opportunity, and so on. Do all this together as a team, if possible (since team work is a great step towards resolving conflict).
- Before saying anything, or putting forth any ideas, *stop and listen first* to both parties equally. *Hear both sides of the story.*

7. Please note that the sequence of the tips here is often irrelevant, since it all depends on the situation and the setting of where and how conflict is being handled.

- Before making any judgments, try to *understand the problem inside-out*. Most importantly, *try understanding the problem from the perspective of the others.*
- *Be mindful of people's emotions involved.* Attempt to analyse and evaluate the emotions of the parties, and how much or what does this all mean to each one of them; find out what is at stake.
- *Listen whole-heartedly*; practicing *active listening* throughout (just nodding your head is not enough). Also, as you listen show compassion for both and try be impartial throughout (in your support).
- *Check if the problem is being acknowledged and understood* by both sides; is everyone on the same page? Are you on the same page as both parties?
- *Be aware of body language.* Make sure you, as the conflict resolver, do not send the wrong message; convey a message of calmness and peace through your body language (show care, maintain eye contact, use neutral voice, check facial expressions, posture). Observe the same on the parties while interacting with you, and with each other.
- First, speak to the parties separately so that they can share with you more freely and comfortably. Later, meet with them together, but have them speak about their issues to you and not to each other too soon in the process (since during this early stage doing so may lead to personal attacks among the parties).
- When the time seems right, *have the parties talk to each other directly under your guidance and supervision* at all times, so that they themselves can come up with possible solutions, instead of you telling them how or what to do (but there will and should be times when you intervene with possible solutions).
- *Be mindful of power dynamics.* Often one party may try or, for one reason or another, may seem to naturally dominate the other,[8] therefore it is important to evaluate such a power struggle

8. This may be because of a person's social status, class, privilege, attitude, etc.

and find a way to balance it; otherwise this can bring the process of resolution to a complete halt. This power struggle can often be eliminated (or at least put aside) by pointing out its presence and keeping it in check throughout the dialogue, and by reminding everyone of the importance of mutual respect (or any other ground rules established together in the beginning of the session).

- *Encourage "I" statements* throughout the dialogue, since "you" statements are often viewed as accusatory (instead of "You said..." for example, use "I think...").
- Before coming to any conclusions, make sure "all cards are on the table" by checking with everyone if all the pieces fit the story so that the conflict (with all its dimensions) is thoroughly understood by everyone.
- *Try to emphasise the positives* (and not the negatives) in the conflict in order to encourage the parties to come to a solution, while keeping in mind *not to minimise anyone's grievances.*
- Only assist and encourage the parties to come to a mutual solution, *your goal is to change the situation, not the individual* (at least not then and there).
- Whatever is shared with you must stay between you and the parties. *Keep the information confidential* so that no one's reputation is harmed.
- Only when it seems right, *humour can be used to communicate something that might be difficult to bring up otherwise.* However, it is important to remember that you can laugh with the person, not at them.[9] Skilfully thought out humour, though, used during sessions is proven to make a positive difference; nevertheless, its use in such sessions is often discouraged by practitioners.
- *The best solution is prevention* (preventing conflict before it arises, if possible).[10]

9. See 'Conflict Resolution Skills' on Helpguide.org
10. For more on the topic, see 'Islam on Family Conflict Resolution' on Soundvision.com

Glossary of Arabic Terms

ﷺ: is the Arabic for *'sallAllahu alayhi wa sallam'* which means peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and is used after the name of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

عليه السلام: is the Arabic for *'alayhi salaam'* which means peace be upon him and is used after the names of the prophets and the Angel Jibril.

رضي الله عنه: is the Arabic for *'radiAllahu anhu'* which means may Allah be please with him. It is used after the names of the male Companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

رضي الله عنها: is the Arabic for *'radiAllahu anha'* which means may Allah be pleased with her. It is used after the names of the female members of the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ family and his female Companions.

BCE: stands for Before Common Era and has been used in place of BC to denote a Gregorian year.

CE: stands for Common Era and has been used in place of AD to denote a Gregorian year.

AH: stands for *Anno Hegirae* and is used to denote the Islamic calendar that starts from the *hijrah* in 623 CE.

abd: meaning 'servant/slave of' used in (masculine) Arabic names, usually before one of the names of Allah, like Abdullah or Abdul-Aziz.

Allah: the Arabic word for God used by Muslim and non-Muslim Arabic speakers alike

aman: security, safety, peace, shelter, protection.

Ansar: lit. the helpers. The people of Madinah who supported the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the *Muhajirun* (Emigrants) when they emigrated from Makkah to Madinah.

caliph: any successor to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as leader of the Muslim community in a Caliphate.

caliphate: Islamic government headed by a caliph.

fasaad: corruption.

fitrah: the pure and original human nature as created by Allah and with which every human being is born.

hadith: written narrative reports of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ sayings, actions and approvals.

Hajj: the pilgrimage to Makkah in the month of *Dhul-Hijjah* (it is one of the five pillars of Islam).

hijrah: meaning 'emigration'; it refers to the journey of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah, and it also marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Hudaybiyyah: a place where a peace treaty was signed between the Prophet ﷺ and the Quraysh tribe.

Ihsan: according to hadith, it is "to worship Allah as if you see Him for if you do not see Him, He sees you." To do a worthy act excellently.

ijma: agreeing upon; consensus of the community, particularly the learned ones; the third source of the Shariah.

ijtihad: independent analysis or interpretation of Islamic law.

imam: 'leader', prayer leader.

Iman: the concept of faith consisting of belief in Allah, the angels, the books of Allah, the prophets, predestination and the Day of Judgement.

insaan:	the Qur'anic Arabic term for human beings.
iqra:	the first revealed word of the Qur'an meaning to 'read or recite'.
islah:	the Qur'anic Arabic term to denote mediation or helping people to reconcile, repair relationships.
Islam:	submission to the will of Allah alone.
jihad:	struggle in the path of Allah for the greater good.
jizyah:	head tax paid by non-Muslims for living under the protection of the Islamic state. Payment of this tax exempts non-Muslims from military service and other taxes payable by the Muslims.
Kabah:	the Sacred House of Allah in Makkah.
khalifa:	the Qur'anic Arabic term for caretaker, vicegerent or representative of Allah referring to human beings.
Madinah:	the shortened form of *Madinah-tun Nabi* – the City of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, formerly known as Yathrib.
Makkah:	the city of birth of the Prophet Muahmmad ﷺ, the location of the Kabah and Islam's holiest city.
maroof:	the Qur'anic Arabic term for good, truth, justice. Muslims are commanded to enjoin others to *maroof.*
Masjid al-Haram:	the mosque that houses the Kabah in Makkah.
muhajirun:	lit. emigrants. Those Companions of the Prophet ﷺ who accepted Islam in Makkah and emigrated to Madinah with the Prophet ﷺ to join the *Ansar.*
munkar:	the Qur'anic Arabic term for evil and injustice. Muslims are commanded to forbid *munkar.*
nafs:	the Qur'anic Arabic term for the self.
qalb:	the Qur'anic Arabic term for the heart.
qiyas:	analogical deductions by learned people; the fourth source of the Shariah.
Quraysh:	the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
Qur'an:	'recitations', the Word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the Archangel Gabriel [Jibril] عليه السلام.

ruh: the soul, spirit that Allah blew into Adam ﷺ, the first human created out of clay. and which is present in all human beings.

Sahabah: Companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, those who met him and accepted his message.

salaam: the Arabic word for *peace*.

salah: ritual prayer (one of the five pillars of Islam).

sawm: fasting during the month of Ramadan (one of the five pillars of Islam).

shahadah: profession of faith: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad ﷺ is His final messenger" (the first pillar of Islam).

shariah: legal tradition, Islamic law or 'path', rules and regulations that govern the day-to-day life of Muslims.

Shiite/Shia: meaning 'party', one who believes that the authority of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is to pass to his descendants.

shirk: associating others with Allah, the only unforgivable sin in Islam if the person dies in such a state.

Sunnah: traditions (sayings, actions and approvals) of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Sunni: one who follows the ways and customs of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and believes that the succession of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was to pass down to any qualified Muslim through the consensus of the Muslim community.

taqwa: God-consciousness, God-wariness.

tawhid: the Oneness of God, that He is Unique and He alone is to be worshipped, and that He has or needs no partners (also written as *tawheed*).

ummah: community of the faithful, refers to the worldwide Muslim community.

Umrah: the lesser pilgrimage to the Kabah that can be performed at any time of the year.

zakat: poor-due, an 'alms tax', obligatory on Muslims (one of the five pillars of Islam).

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Index

Abu Bakr ﷺ, xix, 21, 35, 67, 101
Aishah ﷺ, see Wives of the Prophet ﷺ
Albania, 98-99
Ali ﷺ, xix, 35, 98
Amman Message, The, 36
Archangel Gabriel [Jibril] ﷺ, xv, 20-21, 78
Aziza, Lala of Seksawa, 102

Battles, Islamic
Battle of Badr, xviii, 86-87
Battle of the Trench, xviii, 86
Battle of Uhud, xviii, 86, 125
Battle of Khaybar, 87
Mustaliq, 87

charity (*sadaqah*), 39, 117, 128-129, 133
Christians, 13-15, 17, 29, 39, 95-99
civilisation, 117, 150-151
  Muslim/Islamic, 2-4, 25
  Christian, 14
  Western, 14, 17, 33, 94
  Judeo-Christian, 16
  Judeo-Christian-Islamic, 16
coexistence, 16, 33, 97, 151
Common Word, A, 141
compassion, 58, 75, 86, 91, 93, 96, 98-100, 102, 123, 151
Congress of Three Religions, 83-84
Conquest of Makkah, 89, 95, 97
Constitution of Madinah, 14, 82, 157
Crusades, 12, 14, 33, 51-52, 69, 96

dehumanisation, 6, 7, 9

enmification, 4-7
equality, 2, 40, 48, 72, 79, 92, 100, 116, 146, 151, 161-164
ethics, 27, 56-69
  definition, 56-57
  Islamic, 61-65
  Western, 56-61

Farewell Sermon, 25, 155
fitrah, 105-107, 144
five pillars of Islam, 25, 35, 116, 118, 143, 145
Hajj, 24, 117-118, 143, 155
Salah, 24, 50, 63, 92, 116, 143
Sawm, 24, 63, 117, 143
Shahada, 24, 73, 118, 143
Zakat, 24, 116, 143, 155
forgiveness, ix, 54, 79, 96, 102, 108, 117, 122-125, 136, 144, 146
free will, 105-106, 108, 114

hadith, xii, xvi, xvii, 24, 27, 50, 62, 73, 105-106, 108, 113, 115, 119-120, 124, 127-135, 143-144
hajj, see five pillars of Islam
heart, 21, 29, 64, 86, 93, 104-105, 108-112
diseases of, 104, 109-112
purification, 109
Hudaybiyyah, 87-88, 134, 168
human nature, see also *fitrah*, 5, 26, 105-107, 127, 144
dual nature, 106
hasty, 106
impatient, 106
forgetful, 107, 135
humility, 79, 89, 91, 102, 117, 120-122, 144, 146

Ihsan, 63-64, 126, 144
Ijma, 27, 62
Iman, 63-65
inner peace, see peace
islah, see also mediation, 129-130, 144
Islamophobia, 10-12

Jerusalem, 95-97, 140, 170
Jews, 5, 7, 13-14, 17, 32-33, 39, 46, 52, 82-87, 96-100, 105, 150
jihad, 50-53, 67, 69, 99, 111
greater, 50
lesser, 50
of the word, 99
peaceful, 99
Just War Theory, 58-59, 61, 66
justice (*adl*), 28-29, 39-40, 43-44, 47-52, 59-60, 62, 67-68, 72, 76, 89-90, 98, 100, 102, 115, 125, 129-130, 132-133, 137, 139, 142, 144, 146, 151, 158-161

Khadijah ﷺ, see Wives of the Prophet
knowledge, xv, xvi, 3, 12, 22, 25-26, 42-43, 45, 101, 128, 145

Madinah, xii, 14, 46, 50, 55, 66, 81-88, 91, 96, 146, 157
Madinah Charter, see Constitution of Madinah
Makkah, 19-20, 24, 46, 54-55, 66, 75-82, 84-85, 88-89, 95, 97, 101, 112, 117, 123
media, 8, 10, 15, 33, 52
mediation, 129, 132-134, 140, 144
Muhammad ﷺ, xv-xvii, 14, 19-22, 24, 26, 28-30, 32, 35, 39, 45, 50, 54, 62, 68-69, 73-80, 82-94, 97, 101, 109, 119, 121, 123-124, 126-128, 131, 134, 145-147
before prophethood, 75-78
character, 91-94
example, 77-91
in Makkah, 78-81
in Madinah, 81-91
nonviolence, 53-55, 81, 84, 99, 102, 113, 146

Old Testament, 48-49, 74
Gospel, 17, 24, 61, 83
Torah, 24, 49, 61, 83

Ottoman, 12, 28, 31-32, 35, 98-100
outer peace, see peace

Pacifism, 55, 59, 61, 65-66
patience, 54, 79, 86, 92, 106, 114, 146
peace
  inner, 39, 42-43, 91, 116-118, 135, 144-146
  outer, 39, 91, 116-118, 145
prisoners of war, 67, 68-69, 87, 146
Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, see Muhammad ﷺ
prophets
  Adam ﷺ, 24-25, 44, 77, 106-107, 119-120
  Harun [Aaron] ﷺ, 125
  Ibrahim [Abraham] ﷺ, 19, 79
  Isa [Jesus] ﷺ, 14, 19, 21, 44, 74, 79, 83, 96
  Musa [Moses] ﷺ, 19, 21, 79, 125
  Yusuf [Joseph] ﷺ, 126

Qiyas, 27, 62
Qur'an, xv-xvii, 3, 13, 19-25, 27, 35-36, 39-49, 55, 61-63, 66, 69, 72-73, 78-79, 83-84, 86, 89-91, 98, 100, 104-115, 117-120, 121-135, 139, 143-146, 151-152
  Al-Furqan, 63, 145
  history of, 19-23

Realism, 59-60, 65-66
religion, role in peacemaking, 136-138, 149
revenge, 67, 86, 89-90, 97, 139

Said Nursi, 99
Salahud-Din al-Ayyubi, 95-98
salah, see five pillars of Islam
salaam, 23, 42, 131
sawm, see five pillars of Islam
self-defence, 40, 46, 49-50, 53, 55, 66, 80, 84-85, 90, 145
shahadah, see five pillars of Islam
shariah, 25-29, 67-68, 87, 99, 124, 144
Shi'a, 34-35
sin, 41, 64, 102, 107-108, 117, 121, 124, 131
sulh, 133
Sunni, 34-35
Sufism, 35

Taqwa, 40, 63-64, 109, 127
Tawhid, 24, 43, 80, 105, 121, 145
terrorism, xi, 9, 12, 18, 50, 149
tolerance, 36, 54, 95, 98-99, 136, 142, 146, 151
Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, see Hudaybiyyah

Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ, 95-97, 117
Uthman [ibn Affan] ﷺ, 21

World Wars, 11, 15-16, 31
World War I, 11
World War II, 59
Wives of the Prophet ﷺ, 21, 101-102
  Aishah ﷺ, 92, 101
  Hafsa ﷺ, 101
  Khadijah ﷺ, 101
  Umm Habiba ﷺ, 101
  Umm Salama ﷺ, 101-102
Women, 11, 28, 44, 54, 67, 75, 86-87, 99-102, 117, 127-128, 138-140, 151
  modern peacemakers, 101, 139-140
  equal reward, 100
  rights in Islam, 44, 138, 151, 155
  role models, 100-102, 139-140

zakat, see five pillars of Islam